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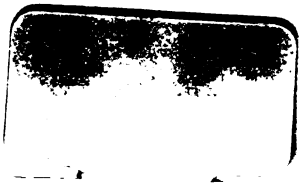

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WHAT IS ART?

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"Every human action gains in honour, in grace, in all true magnificence, by its regard to things that are to come. It is the far sight, the quiet and confident patience, that, above all other attributes, separate man from man, and near him to his Maker; and there is no action, nor art, whose majesty we may not measure by this test. Therefore, when we build, let us think that we build for ever."—JOHN RUSKIN, *Seven Lamps of Architecture.*

"Thou canst not serve God and Mammon."

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WHAT IS ART?

BY

JAMES STANLEY LITTLE.

"Art is not a learned profession."—SEYMOUR HADEN.

"The measure of the value of art is to be found in an occult presence, which goes with it—a communication of mind with mind, through which we gain a wider range of vision, a deeper penetration into the mysteries of life, a truer perception of our relationship with each other, and with the world which is our home."—WYKE BAYLISS.

"Of all vain fools with coxcomb talents curst,
Bad painters and bad poets are the worst."
C. A. DU FRESNOY.

London:
W. SWAN SONNENSCHEIN AND CO.,
PATERNOSTER SQUARE.
1884.

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Prof. J. M. Peirce.

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This
Work is dedicated
to
the Memory
of
CECIL LAWSON
known to the Author only in the
spirit.

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PREFACE.

A PREFACE is an appeal to the public. It is the author's manifesto to the public. My work from beginning to end is an outcry against oppression and prejudice; a demand for freedom and for fair play.

I have no other manifesto. I make no other appeal. Further preface is needless.

JAMES STANLEY LITTLE.

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WHAT IS ART?

CHAPTER I.

WHAT IS ART?

WHAT is Art? It is Worship. It is Religion. It is Poetry. It is Truth. It is the apotheosis of the sublime, of the ethereal. True art has no special mission. Its mission is to elevate, to ennoble, to beautify, and to refine. The pulpit, the drama, and poetry have no other mission. Men have become too serious to have time merely to be amused. Men want recreation; they crave change; they demand originality. To the advanced, in our day, to be simply tickled is no real amusement. It is vacuity, it is boredom. It awakens no responsive chord in the heart.

You cannot separate art, in its higher form, in its higher meaning, from religion. Music,

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poetry, and painting are first and foremost a holy trinity. They are sent to remind men that they have a nobler nature than the earthworm that grovels. Sent to teach men that if they will it, they may become as gods, seeing good and evil. Sent to refine our baser clay into gold.

I am now and hereafter in this work concerned directly with art as painting; and here let me pause to remark how all-insufficient is the term Art itself, to express what art can be, and should be. To the ordinary mind the word suggests nothing more than is denoted by the term Artifice. The artist is supposed to be solely a cunning worker. So he is, or so he should be. But he must be something much more than this. The art of painting is popularly regarded as being nothing more than the power of skilfully transcribing natural objects. The artist to the vulgar is essentially a clever copyist, or a narrator of historical events—a kind of court jester, whose office is to please and flatter the senses. The artist may be able, and should full often be able, to accomplish all these things; but he has stopped far short of any high ideal, if he can remain content with such poor and meagre results.

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Such results, each in their turn, and each in their degree, have savage races achieved. The Red Indians show a certain rude sense of form, a certain quaintness of thought, in their tatooings. Bushmen adorn their caves with diagrams of wild animals, while no savage race is altogether wanting in the display of some crude artistic instinct, in its personal and domestic embellishments.

All these are but signs, forebodings, or symptoms of one fact—a striving for the beautiful; or, in other words, an effort to gain harmony; sympathy between man and the Great Infinity, between man and man; a desire to create something in which these yearnings might obtain some measure of rest, some meed of hope. The means at the disposal of the savage in the attainment of this end are small, as his need is small.

Art, then, comes to be merely a reflex of the thought of man. Be his thoughts wide, generous, aspiring, his art will be elevated thereby; or, more properly, it will be a reflection of those thoughts. Be his thoughts base, grovelling, sensual—petty, unambitious, sordid, his art will degenerate in exact pro-

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portion to the predominance of such thoughts. It will, as these thoughts gain the mastery, become at first merely *pretty*, and subsequently demoralizing and vile. In these respects, as in all others, art is yoked with poetry, music, and theology. I use the word theology, and not religion, because the term religion is synonymous with all in art, music, and poetry which elevates them above mere artifice.

It is not my intention to say much about the history of Art. It is a well-worn ground, and a few historical examples to prove previous contentions will suffice.

First, then, in the case of savages, and of primitive peoples generally, Art never rises above the effort to please the senses, and to satisfy the early aspirations of awakening but still brutalized intellects. The art of such races, like their gods, is base and human. Their music is sound and fury, only occasionally foreshadowing the birth of a better day; while the same may be said of their poetry.

For the rest, art has in all ages gone hand in hand with intellectual progress or intellectual enslavement, and it has stamped upon canvas, or in marble, unimpeachable evidences of the

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moral and metaphysical condition of men, in the respective ages and countries, in which it has been produced.

Thus the cruel, hard theology of ancient Greece, with all its beautiful allegory, is symbolized in its cold but unsurpassed statuary. The tremendous flood of new thoughts which came in upon Spain, as the result of the discovery of the New World, took time to germinate, but it ultimately produced a Murillo and Velasquez. The revival of art in Italy was more or less contemporaneous with the birth of a deeper and more serious religious feeling, as shown in ecclesiastical matters, in that country. Italy, which for so many centuries was the centre of culture and thought for all civilized Europe, may be said to have lost the salt in its art, so soon as the salt went out from its Church. The national character of the Dutch, exemplified in dogged determination in the resistance of oppression, at last found a power to lead it, in William of Orange; but the existence of lofty aspirations had been long presaged in the school of painters which they had given the world. The emancipation of thought in England during the Elizabethan period, found expression in

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poetry, not in painting; and it cannot be denied that with one or two brilliant exceptions, poetry and not painting has been made the medium for the indication of the enormous intellectual development of this country, which, with a few periods of cessation and retrogression, may be said to have been in process of growth ever since. Poetry must be the forerunner of art. For sublime words must be understood by the masses before the deeper subtilties of art can be comprehended. Poetry and art are so nearly allied as to be almost indistinguishable; and if I may attempt to draw the distinction, I would say that art steps in where words are no longer of any avail to express the Sublime. Just in the measure of the superlative pre-eminence of our poets, so may we hope that the day is dawning when our painters shall be commensurately pre-eminent, of which dawn we have already had more than one hopeful glimmer.

Art has had to suffer, in company with its sisters—the drama, poetry, and music—very unworthy treatment at the hands of our forefathers. In all ages art and its congeners have struggled in common to be recognized as fitting colleagues of theology, and with theology

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to be acknowledged as the great elevating and refining influences, at work in the cause of humanity.

The priests being the first in the field—that is to say, the first to gain a superlative power over men—for men must be very advanced indeed if any other agency is to have a chance of standing its ground against superstition—had for a time full and unfettered control, not only of ordinary mortals, but even of poets, painters, and the great masters of the secrets of harmony as applied to music. In other ages, and perhaps, in our own, the very existence of priesthoods is threatened, because as bodies they refuse to acknowledge, that sweetness and light may come in upon the world, albeit they be not encrusted in the hard, dry husk of theology. So long as the drama, music, painting, and verse have consented to remain the adjuncts—the reflected lights of creeds and of dogmas—so long have they been tolerated by the Church. But so soon as they have claimed for themselves a separate hearing, so soon have they been anathematized and excommunicated by narrow bigotry and cant. For man has a fatal proneness. He is

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apt to consider that *he* and *he alone* is the person set aside by God to proclaim *truth* unto the world. Theologians have been the greatest sinners in this respect, although by no means the only sinners. Theologians have too often repelled, where they could not dominate and direct those mighty elevating influences, which they should have been content to have regarded applaudingly and sympathetically as sometimes accessories, sometimes leaders, in the effort to reach the higher life in religion. The fine arts themselves have shown the same fatal tendency to fossilize and to crystallize as has theology. There are popes and Mahomets in the drama, verse, music, and painting, just as there are in religion. Orthodoxy exists in these in precisely the same manner. Battles fierce and long have been waged between innovators upon, and followers of, the old Greek methods in the drama; conflicts have raged concerning metres and feet, and as to how far the license called poetical license might be carried. Musical canons have been insisted upon by the objectors to the music which is called "the music of the future;" and as to painting, the existence of the Grosvenor Gallery

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may be taken as one index among many, that orthodox standards are subject to rebellious attack in painting, as in everything else. But the anathemas hurled at Wagner and Liszt, at Shelley and Rossetti, are only symptoms of the common and all-pervading disease of orthodoxy, or "soundness" so called. The surest indication of decay and corruption may be looked for when this title is insisted upon by any institution. Orthodoxy is the disease which stands in the way of all advance, which anathematizes all thought which refuses to be bound and fettered by its miserable trammels.

But to return to the more direct bearing of my argument. In contemplating the struggle which the fine arts have made to be recognized as a part and parcel of the religious life of a country, and to be allowed to work in harmony with, though not dependent upon, or under the *ægis* of theology, what find we? We find that at length after a severe struggle a certain measure of success has crowned this effort. The pulpit and the drama have fallen into one another's arms, the imaginary line between secular and sacred high-class music of all kinds is being broken down; hot Tories and ultra-

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churchmen are commencing to quote Shelley and worship at his shrine; while it is beginning to dawn upon the minds of ministers of the gospel, and all earnest and philanthropic lovers of their fellows, that pictures have a higher mission than merely to divert the attention, to gratify and amuse; that they are capable rather of indicating the way to a higher life, and of inspiring men with new thoughts and new aims; of training them, in fact, to persevere in virtuous resolves; of firing their enthusiasm for goodness, holiness, and righteousness. To be to them as a mission from God; to give them eyes to see and ears to hear His call to every man to lead a fuller, nobler life—this is the mission of true art, and this is the mission for which it is now beginning to demand recognition.

Words are finite. They may be capable, and they doubtless are capable, of manifold interpretation. Shakespeare, Spenser, Shelley, and Tennyson, they speak differently to each one of us. We can none of us, perhaps, see the full extent of the poet's meaning. May be, some of the most sympathetic can get no more than a faint glimmer of the inner soul of such

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men, for poets such as these can at best only hope to lay bare one-twentieth part of their inner souls, in their works. Music has far more scope in this respect. It is not bound by an arbitrary and all too feeble vocabulary of words. It can suggest thoughts and emotions, longings and aspirations to the soul, which words are perfectly powerless to convey. Blest, happy man who is born a true musician, who is endowed with the power to make sound the trumpet of his soul. But the true artist—I say *true* advisedly—has to thank his God for even more. By a myriad colours and tones, by the inexhaustible realm of form, he can symbolize his inner man. He has all nature at his feet from which he can draw inspiration, and which he can make subserve him in the expression of his inmost self. Upon the face of nature, it is for him to stamp his thoughts about her, his yearnings and aspirations, his theories and his day dreams, his manifesto of light and joy to the world. The true artist is poet, priest, seer, prophet, musician, actor, all in one. Thrice blest, thrice happy man! More than this, when it is his lot to fall upon a world ready and able to hear him.

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The musician has his chromatic scales and his tones and semitones, but they cannot so directly express his feeling for nature and for God as the arts of the painter can express his. The painter has the whole tangible and intangible world at his feet, to do with both as seemeth best to him. The musician can only simulate sounds, such as the rushing of the brook, the warble of the birds; or the crashes of natural forces, the grand thud of breakers on the shore, or the artillery of the heavens. From these, to the insight of the poetic mind, form and colour can be gleaned. But the painter has both form and colour at his command—natural forms and pictures of the mind. Thus it is only the advanced who can discover volumes of lyrics, and tomes instinct with the deepest subtilties of metaphysics, in the works of Cecil Lawson, and it is probably given to none to interpret in anything but a very limited manner, the hidden meaning underlying the actual physical conformations which he portrays. But the meaning is there, delineated with a pathos and poetic sublimity of imagination, which must make his works immortal.

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It is true the musician can command a certain force denied to the painter, in that he can call to his aid the organs of sound. But this gain is, to my mind, by no means a compensation for the more potent disabilities which I have enumerated. Sound is after all a far lower and less subtile sense than sight. Language is a poor vehicle for the expression of thought; and music, although a much higher medium, is also lacking in the elements which would make it possible for it to claim preeminence. The blind man says, "I can hear thy voice, I know that thou art kind;" but a person denied the sense of hearing learns this far more effectually by a flash from the eye. Is not dumb action always the culminating point of a love scene? There comes a time when words are mutually known to be inadequate to express the soul-throbs; and it is in standing before the works of great masters, or the works of the great God, that we are struck speechless.

So much for this contention.

The word Art, what a poor miserable word! What can it express? Many things—how widely dissimilar!—are embraced in the term, of

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which things, the higher and nobler, seem to press against its sides, demanding it to spread its pigmy form, to expand its puny dimensions, or to stand out of the way altogether and make room for some other term. I know no better than the somewhat lengthy phrase, "The Higher Life in Art."

I will end this chapter as I commenced it, and reiterate that Art, in popular estimation, is simply regarded as so much manipulative cunning—mere artifice. Thus the skilful *coiffeur* is an artist, the experienced *chef* likewise, and moreover the landscape gardener (from whom God preserve us), the man who rides the bare-backed horse, or walks the tight-rope, or the lady in short skirts who ambles "to the lascivious pleasures of a lute," the photographer who *reproduces* natural objects by a mechanical process, and, above all, the careful transcriber of nature in pencil or in oil—he too forsooth is an artist. These, and many others, lay claim to the name. Far be it from me to deny that they may not one and all be artists, in so much, and in so far, as they are conscientious to some higher aim in what they do, than that of merely amusing or pleasing. But, in dealing with

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such *artists* as a mass, who can say that in such this higher aim has its being? and, moreover, the Art with which this book is concerned is something widely different from any of these things.

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CHAPTER II.

ART IN ITS HIGHEST FORM.

DESIGNING, decorating, and the like, have each their important functions. Far be it from me to disparage them; but no sane man ever claimed for them a very high place in art, and I shall therefore not waste time by putting up phantoms merely to knock them down. Sculpture, with all its charms, labours under the very serious defect of lacking colour, and no charm of form can compensate for this deficiency.

Painting may be properly divided into three main divisions. Portrait painting and painting from still life, which I would place on the lowest pedestal of art; historical painting, in which may be roughly classed figure painting generally, and to which, I believe, the second place of honour is due; and landscape painting, which, on account of its far greater capabilities

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of poetic treatment, or, more accurately, its far higher capabilities for the expression of the idealistic and the beautiful, I would place in the very first rank of all painting, and indeed of all art.

It has been again and again contested, that art can have no higher aim and aspiration than the delineation of the "human form divine." This is neither true of figure painting nor of portraiture pure and simple. Concerning portraiture, if portrait painters were all content to choose their own subjects for treatment, if they contented themselves with the delineation of the features of a Huxley or a Tyndall, a Longfellow or a Tennyson, a Beaconsfield or a Gladstone, men whose features bear the stamp of intense individuality, some little force might appertain to the arguments of those who claim for portraiture a high place in art. This, however, is very far from being the case. Can anybody point to any one painter who has done this? Sir Joshua Reynolds was perhaps as skilful a portrait painter as any man of his day. His success in simulating flesh tints was remarkable, and his fidelity to his subject unquestionable. But the effect produced by the recent exhibition of his works was very far from

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elevating. One found one's self in the midst of the counterfeit presentments of a mass of sensual-looking men and women—followers of fashion, and devotees of the golden calf of ease and comfort. But what more can one expect from a man, who laid himself out to be a fashionable portrait painter, at everybody's beck and call who could afford to pay heavily for the luxury—libertines, gilded youths, and frivolous women. I have already implied that I consider that the portrait painter should only select the comely and the graceful as fitting subjects for the exercise of his skill. It is quite true that the outwardly comely or beautiful woman, or the stalwart man, may lack any qualities to inspire the highest powers of the portrait painter. The stamp of intellect, thought, and originality may be wanting in his or her features. A pretty woman standing alone is an adorable creature, so is a lovely flower, but both are sorry subjects as media for the poet artist, whereby he may flash forth his soul; whereas even the face of a philosopher, or a philanthropist, grandly marked by thought as it may be, is by no means a perfect medium for the expression of the metaphysical

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and poetic instincts of an artist. He is too effectually fettered by hard dry facts. In the one case he may have a subject, graceful and perfect in form and in colour, but whose features for ever wear a meaningless expression, indicative of the soulless being within which they envelope; in the other he may have a grand intellect, unable to foreshadow this grandeur in the features, which may be coarse and brutal. In either case the artist is tremendously handicapped; for while it is true that the skill of the artist is shown in his knowledge of when to conceal, and when to reveal, in this case such a course is impossible.

If he put intellect into the face of a Miss Gunnings he destroys the likeness, and is, moreover, untruthful to his subject; and the same result accrues if he endeavour to soften down the asperities of feature peculiar to a Dr. Johnson. The portrait painter who possesses the rare power of being able to paint mind as well as feature, would need to be very careful in the selection of subjects for treatment were he faithful to his endowment. The temptations to prostitute his art are manifold. Therefore it happens that the very best type of

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all portrait painting must be idealistic; when, in short, the artist steps forth from the debasing trammels of the mere copyist of isolated portions of Nature's handiwork, and bends his energies to transfer to canvas his ideals concerning the capabilities and possibilities of the human form. Sir Joshua Reynolds was essentially a portrait painter, whose landscapes are beneath contempt; but even his best portraits were marred and brutalized by the classic craze to which he descended, not only in the robing of his subjects, but also in the weak and crude backgrounds in the shape of little pieces of landscape with which he disfigured, while he probably thought he was embellishing, his best work. There can be no doubt that figure painting, the painting of historical subjects, and subject painting of all kinds, occupy a higher place in the art of painting than mere portraiture. Here the artist has more scope. He can select worthy subjects from past history from which to draw his inspiration. He can hold up the good to honour and praise, and he can teach useful lessons by showing the fate of the evildoer. I cannot think, however, that this last performance comes within the proper

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boundary line of the province of the artist, whose real concern is with the sublime and the beautiful, not with the base and brutal. The art of *genre* and historical painting has very much to recommend it. It necessitates careful study of the manners and customs, dress and general *entourage*, of past and contemporary history. It brings us back living pictures of the past, and it will assist the future historian in writing the history of the days we live in. Such a picture as "The Empty Saddle" goes further than this; and while it awakens our sympathies for suffering; by leaving so much unsaid it allows full scope for the exercise of our imaginative faculties. Then, again, such a man as Landseer did a grand work for the animal world, and the lines written of him after his death, only gave him the measure of honour which he will be accorded by posterity. After all, animals are in a certain sense more worthy of the painter's art than are men. In their delineation he is brought nearer to the delineation of nature in its pristinity and purity, although not so near as he is brought in the representation of natural objects—trees and mountains, clouds and rivers, let us say.

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Man is only a fitting subject for the highest efforts of artistic genius when he is portrayed in the performance of some high and lofty mission, or in giving outward expression to the dictates of the noblest attributes of his nature, that is to say, in the enactment of some grand work inspired by genius, sympathy, or love.

The Dutch school of painting delighted in the representation of the interiors of wayside inns or stables. Pigstyes and cowsheds were by no means despised. Wilkie has to some extent followed this school, which has without doubt its poetic tendencies, for does it not teach us to sympathize with the humble joys and sorrows of humanity? and by its aid we are able to get touch of the inner life of the peasantry of past ages; in short, the lessons it can teach are manifold and lofty. Goethe's words are true in a sense—the artist never need fear the commonplace, he discovers its hidden nobility. Nevertheless, so long as he is bound by hard and fast lines, and uncompromising actualities, his art cannot lend itself to the successful interpretation of those highest flights of poetic genius of which art is capable. In order more fully to elaborate and explain the

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final consummation to which I am working, I will take the case of Van Ostade as an example. In his pictures much of the beautiful is to be found. In his interiors, the beauty of age—and with all due deference to the popular voice, which has for ever associated beauty with youth, I am here to maintain that the beauty of youth is but a poor and ineffectual forecast of the beauty of age—in the rustic garb of the peasantry, glowing with the poetry of the fields, their lines ennobled and elevated by the grace and dignity of labour; for the most perfect of exquisites, with his polished exterior and careful grooming, cannot, on the score of beauty, be put in competition for a moment with the knocked-kneed, slouching son of the soil surrounded by his proper element, for his grace is all from above, unfettered, unconscious, spontaneous.

It may be said, What praise greater than this can be accorded to Van Ostade and his compeers? But it must be remembered that concerning all such pictures, no matter how grand they may be, or how powerful their influence may be for good, or how capable they may be of leading us up to higher things, yet they fall

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short of the expression of those higher things in that they deal with subjects upon which the impress of sin is stamped. Sin—a word synonymous with crudity, or lack of experience. Wherever man is, sin and depravity come in. Man is capable of conceiving the noblest emotions concerning the beautiful and the sublime. But these conceptions can never be sustained conceptions with him, and therefore his introduction into the composition of a landscape is open to grave objection. A landscape in its higher sense must be merely a poem in colour, an outpouring of man's devotion to nature, or, in other words, to the Deity. Thus comes it that the landscape in its highest possible form should be bereft of human life. The landscape of such an order is briefly as follows. The thinker conceives high and noble thoughts about the Deity—futurity, love, sympathy, and holiness. He requires symbols whereby he may convey those conceptions to others. He seeks for those symbols. He finds them in their most perfect, their most adaptable, most sympathetic, elastic, and comprehensive forms in so-called inanimate nature, which he peoples with the images of his own brain, and makes

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each tree, each cloud, each vale, each hill, speak clarion-toned the mission he has been called upon to proclaim.

It may be thought that in the foregoing indication of the landscape-painter's province in art, I have very much curtailed his powers of selection, and that I have robbed him of the right to introduce buildings and other indications of man's handiwork into his conceptions. Not so. To him belongs the right of choice, he knows what to choose and what to reject. The most lovely building in the world—speaking in a conventional manner—adds nothing, in the eyes of the poet, to Nature's face, but ugly angry frowns and hideous contortions. But the matter does not end here, for how worthy is Nature seen to be of the ardent adoration of the noblest sons who have sprung from her, when we find her all-forgiving, all-loving, long-suffering, and ever-reconciling, enduring many agonies; but at last compelling the crudities and harsh abominations, by which man has offered her insult, to have done with their hostility, and to become gradually reconciled to her, to merge themselves into her, to conclude a holy marriage with her, and in the end

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to aid her, and to strengthen her, to fructify her, and to inspire her sons with fresh love and adoration for herself.

And Nature has two ways of accomplishing this object. The one gradual and lasting, the other sudden but temporary.

As to the first way. The method is most beautiful, most weird. Church, palace, mansion; cottage, stable, barn, all come under its influence. The stones merge the one into the other, the hard crude lines become lost in an imperceptible haziness. Lichen and moss, the industry of birds and of insects, all work in harmony together, until Nature's loving hand has forgiven and blessed, or, in other words, perfected and beautified the very enemies who came in bold array against her. Nature uses the agencies of corruption to accomplish her work. Heat and damp, wind and storm, until she has humbled the proud strength of her opponents, and they then crave and receive her benediction. What a symbol we have here of the methods of the Deity, who brings us up to unity with Himself through suffering and through hell pangs !

And for the second method. Who has not

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seen buildings and objects at which erstwhile his soul had trembled, suddenly, by the kindly aid of a passing storm cloud, or of the dying rays of the sun, ennobled and made grandly weird and lovely? What a token is this of the fitful promise of the dawn of a better day which we sometimes see in the actions of, or may be, merely in a glance or passing expression in the faces of, bad and sordid men! This leads me to my next chapter—Mystery in Art.

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CHAPTER III.

MYSTERY IN ART.

MYSTERY—how grand a word is this, albeit its higher meaning has been much debased in popular acceptation! The passion for mystery is common to all mankind; but the unthinking fail to see the real mystery in Nature, and fly to the so-called supernatural, blind and fallacious, as if anything could be supernatural where all is natural. They create ghost and goblins, or fasting girls and haunted houses, and all the wretched category of absurd phenomena, to feed their barbaric love of the gruesome and the awful.

The supernatural does not exist; it is merely a term, nothing more. Everything is natural and guided by law, but as we advance in science we widen the scope of the knowledge of our own ignorance, and open up fresh vistas in which to view our own puny dimensions.

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Men of genius, men who live and move and have their being in the highest intellectual planes, are the most alive to mystery, for they are, each moment, brought face to face with mysteries of which the masses never dream. The scientist, the painter, the poet, and the musician get nearer to the inexplicable mysteries of nature than does ordinary clay, and they aim in their work to make this patent to the world. The recognition of, and interpretation of mystery is one of the great aims of the artist, be he painter, poet, or musician. He loves to picture the Beyond and Above, but he refuses to consent to be bound by the arbitrary line between knowledge and speculation to which the scientist bows. Moreover, the artist delights in half-concealing and half-revealing his knowledge, and thereby he leaves to those for whom he works, the power to indulge to the fullest extent their imaginative faculties. He does not say to us, "Thus far have I gone, follow me;" he leaves us in doubt as to how far he has gone, and it depends upon ourselves as to whether his work shall be an inspiration to us, the fuel for our imaginative faculty, or shall be merely a dead letter.

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This is so, because he arrives at his conclusions and his theories by a different process to the scientist. He is intuitively endowed with a sympathy for the mysterious, and an inner all-unconscious consciousness of natural laws, which the scientist arrives at by patient investigation. Both must go to nature, of course, and study her deeply and tenderly. But their methods are different. The scientist carries you up to a certain point, and there leaves you; and so soon as he refuses to do this, as the greatest scientists have refused, he ceases to be a scientist, and developes the attributes of a poet. So comes it that all the highest exponents of science end by becoming poets, where they commenced investigators solely; whereas, as soon as the painter or poet draws the line at merely asserting all he knows or feels, so soon he ceases to be an artist at all. But as concerning science and art, the two, however much they may be in harmony, must ever have a separate function. Science is concerned with logic, art with imagination. To briefly epitomize the foregoing contentions, I may say that no picture can be capable of satisfying in a sustained manner the subtile refinements of the higher intellect, which

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is not content to leave much unsaid, merely indicating this by hints and suggestions. Pictures whose aim is solely to act as keys to the conclusions of the botanist, meteorologist, or geologist, are useful doubtless as such, but should never be ranked as high art, or, in fact, as art at all, in the sense in which the word has been used and will continue to be used in these pages. Art is an interpreter, not a transcriber: a suggester, not a realizer. Art does not, or should not, attempt to rival nature, to equal nature even; its aim should be to stamp the mind of one who has looked at nature sympathetically upon canvas. A thinker goes alone to a landscape, and looks at it with eyes which bring to him all manner of yearnings and aspirations. If he be a poet he puts these thoughts into words; if a painter, upon canvas; and so he enhances the natural beauty of a landscape for ever, which to the unimaginative would only suggest so much *prettiness*. He thus helps weaker mortals to see and to feel the grand thought-inspiring capabilities inherent in nature, and he registers his own thoughts for others to revel in, and, may be, to enlarge upon. Thus a Huxley may view a work of a Cecil Lawson and

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say to himself: "Here is a man who conceives the mystery of creation in all its grand simplicity and breadth, which I have been endeavouring to elaborate in detail. I am thankful to him, for he is showing the world that nature in its wider aspects is not only supremely beautiful, but infinitely wonderful and mysterious; how much is my mission helped and strengthened who am concerned with the analysis of the component parts of nature, if so much of its aggregate mystery can be portrayed by a few strokes of the brush of the master! How great an incentive is this to me, to show where the mystery lies in each particular atom of a whole, which is demonstrated to be so mysterious and awe-inspiring!"

Thus the beholder, having eyes to see, seeing may believe. Be he scientist, the mysterious strengthens his desire to investigate; and be he poet or painter, he is stimulated to higher flights of imagination.

And to the wide world. Seeing how beautiful this earth is to one—how mysterious, rich gems of thought open to the sympathetic beholder! He takes into the inner recesses of his brain the mental images of another; he

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moulds them into other conceits, which in their turn flow forth to fructify other plains. Thus may one picture, one mental image, supply a thousand minds with shape and form for countless fugitive aspirations; aspirations which their possessors have never been able to reduce to substance, or to evolve from the aching voids from which they only obtruded themselves for a moment, an obtrusion which alone served to make the void more apparent and more real than heretofore. What rest, then, does the poet-painter afford to many painéd souls in search of light! He gives them a beacon to guide them o'er the desolate wildernesses, and through the lurking chasms of life; and he leads them onward into the pleasant pasturages of Faith, Hope, Charity, and Love.

Rest is an incentive to work: rest is work, and work is rest. The terms are synonymous, paradoxical as it may seem. The inner warring of doubts and aspirations ends in a peaceful calm, where rest is found; and during the continuance of that rest the life-work of the storm-tossed mariner is accomplished. Work is nothing more nor less than concentrated force, concentrated passion, which, allowed to run

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riot, must inevitably produce sin—give birth to sin. Work, then, comes to be the antidote for sin; and so comes it that the rest so needful to obtain really means the harvest-time of all charity and all virtue.

From the foregoing it may be gathered that mystery and suggestiveness are the groundwork of all that is subtile and all that is poetic in art: all that is capable of lifting man upward to higher and nobler aims in life.

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CHAPTER IV.

RELIGION IN ART, AND MAMMON WORSHIP.

RELIGION is popularly supposed to be confined within the narrow boundary-lines of theology, lines which all too often cramp and even kill the very growth they were designed to preserve. Religion is worship, adoration of the beautiful, of the Deity the maker of all things; and, being so, it finds expression in verse, painting, and music.

It is very difficult to disassociate these three, but I am now directly concerned with painting; and although I repudiate distinctions and comparisons, I will at least say, that I believe painting has quite as much to do with religion as any of its sister arts.

An analogy drawn from poetry will fitly illustrate the connection which I hold to subsist between the fine arts and religion.

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Many opinions have been expressed concerning Mr. Tennyson's elevation to the peerage. This is no place to ventilate that subject; but among the variety of opinions I have heard concerning it, none has pained me so much as the remark of a lady who knew Mr. Tennyson in his youth. "What," said she, "has Mr. Tennyson done for his country? He has neither ruled it as a Beaconsfield, nor bled for it as a Wolfe, nor atoned its sins as a Bunyan." It was useless for me to reply that he had done and was doing all these things. He rules, he bleeds, he offers up sacrifices for his country. His influence in moulding men's lives, in refining their thoughts, in inspiring them with hope and new life and vigour to combat evil and do that which is right, can never be measured. These influences are boundless, and just in the measure of their subtilty so are they dominant and enduring, and they will spread their teaching and power over countless millions unborn.

God does not put His outward sign upon those He sends to lift men into accord with Himself. He leaves His elect to discover that sign, and they in their turn discover it to ever

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widening circles. How true it is, moreover, that a prophet hath no honour in his own city. The unthinking herd refuses to believe that the man who was born among them, and was erstwhile as one of them, can be really in any way different from them. They mistake the manifestation of genius for the successful assertion of so much mere cleverness, combined with what they call "luck." So soon as this genius, which they have failed to appreciate begins to be recognized from without, they suddenly develope a desire to keep their neglected and unhonoured prophet among them, so that their minute microcosm may shine by the reflected light of his glory. When he goes out from them, as go he must, and shakes the dust from off his feet behind him, they are one and all ready to stone him to death. They are eager to retail his weaknesses and delinquencies, and they await with the avidity of the carrion-devourer for any rumours of his failings and his lapses, which may be wafted to them—so much do they hate the man who would be as none of them. And these rumours are not long in coming. Alas! for man's fatal weakness. He is prone to stumble over the obstacles

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which the world places in his road in his progress heavenward. This may seem a strong term, but in dealing with painters and poets I am, as heretofore, only concerned with those who are really entitled to such names: to heaven-born men, to men of genius, in fact; men with lofty ideals, men who have been privileged to see just a little behind the veil, men with the force and power to persevere in the endeavour to pierce that veil still further, that they may let the light through to guide the steps of poor erring mortals far away from the fountain-head of Light. In other words, the Genius, by reason of his proximity to that fountain-head, is illumined and suffused thereby, and reflects the light around upon all who come under his influence. To such as these, religion in art has a great meaning and a great possibility. It also has a great danger. Such men may debase their God-given gifts, and may make those very gifts the instruments of Mammon, or they may use them as a light to lighten the world.

Mankind is not always happy in the endeavour to distinguish gold from dross. The unthinking can never discover the distinction. Charlatans and empirics have in all ages usurped the place

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of prophets and seers. The shadow is mistaken for the substance. The masses only perceive the outward semblance of things; they are too often blind to deep-seated realities. Take the men whom the world calls great orators, and examine closely what they say; as apart from how they say it. It will not unfrequently be discovered, that many among those, upon whom the gift of language has been bestowed, have after all nothing but chaff to offer the world. The formation of their sentences may be faultless, no technical flaw to be discovered anywhere; their orations may even rise to the dignity of rhythm and music, and be of such a high order, from the point of view of workmanship, as to have been capable of pleasing the hypercritical ear of a Cicero or a Quintilian. Further, they may use their powers in a good cause. They may use them faithfully. They may bring them to the elucidation of grand ideas and aspirations, and they may help to render such ideas and aspirations understandable by the people. Again, they may use such powers in the service of sophistry and falsehood. Such powers may be made the greatest boon to mankind, or the contrary. But

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in the above description I have not sketched the true orator. I have merely enumerated some of the embellishments which a true orator will do well to cultivate, and which a true orator will undoubtedly end by possessing, in greater or in lesser degree. The true orator is a genius possessed of original conceptions of truth, and born with an intuitive insight into futurity denied to ordinary mortals. His technical qualifications may be poor, in comparison with those of many orators who simply expound the theories of other men; although I reiterate what I have before said, that the power of original thought invariably masters the technique of whatsoever machine it may choose, by which to give expression to the imaginations of its inmost self—its soul. It even masters or controls natural defects which would appear to be almost insurmountable—witness a St. Paul, Demosthenes, Edmund Kean, Henry Irving, or Martin Luther, and it triumphs in spite of them. But there is no surer sign of decay in the substance, when the setting is made the highest aim and object. The decay of reasoning powers on the part of the Romans was presaged by the excessive

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attention paid to the technicalities of eloquence. It has been truly said, indeed, "that art is designed to aid, not to supersede, reason."

Thus genius is led, may be, by what I may conventionally style accident—although there is no such thing as accident—may be by some inherent cunning of hand, or of voice, or of sight, to choose some particular medium whereby to make known its declaration to the world. But this inherent cunning of hand or voice, or sight, has nothing whatever to do with genius. Otherwise, why is not the veriest penny-a-liner a Gibbon or a Henry George? the sweetest warbler of ballads a Mendelssohn? the man often met with in society, blessed with a voice cultured and sympathetic to the point of perfection, a Brandram? And, moreover, why is not a Brandram a Shakespeare? and so forth in instances capable of indefinite prolongation. The mere faculty, mere cleverness, mere gifts, have nothing to do with genius at all. On the contrary, the genius may often experience immense difficulty in mastering the technicalities of the art he has espoused; technicalities which the merest hodman may not only master at once, but of which he may spontaneously

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demonstrate his intuitive knowledge. But then, if he be indeed but a hodman, and not a Burns thus disguised, this mere *cunning* (I use the word for lack of a better) will be his Alpha and his Omega. This same *cunning*, whether it be innate or acquired, in the case of the genius is at best only a clumsy and ineffectual means of making known to the world the *light* which burns within. In brief, think not your mere clever draughtsman or clever colourist is in any wise an artist; nor your apt versifier, a poet; nor your mere skilful executant or harmonizer, a musician. Think not that your real poets, painters, musicians, orators, preachers, and writers are distinct species, with distinct aims and objects in life. They have only chosen a different railway along which to run their goods' conveyance; or, what amounts to the same thing, circumstances and environment; or those natural talents of which I have written have determined the particular line of railway for them. In many cases they could just as successfully have run their goods down another line, the line chosen being simply decided by the accident of the terminus which they happened to be near when they were ready to start,

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or the particular destination at which they were anxious to arrive. Sometimes, it is true, a mistake has been made in the choice of the line—as it was in the case of Thackeray—but it has been righted after a time; nor in any such cases am I by any means convinced, that a successful assertion of the great soul within might not have resulted from a persistent adherence to a vocation originally chosen. But life is too short for delays, and these great masters were right in changing at the first junction, and getting into an express train which gave them the opportunity of reaching their destination, without incurring the delays of repeated stoppages, and the innumerable obstacles to progress which the uneven country before them would have made inevitable.

At the risk of repetition let me again say, Do not—for it is the mother of all evils in our estimation of art—do not imagine that any mere cunning can produce an *Artist*. The most magnificent talent for writing verse will *per se* never make a poet; the most wonderful power of evolving plots, or command of the Queen's English, will never make a novelist; the most pre-eminent ability in the rattling of

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dry bones, or power of declamation, or extraordinary memory, will never make a preacher, an orator, or an actor; the most marvellous expertness in the manipulation of paints and of brushes, the most accurate powers of imitation or composition, will never make an artist; nor will the most complete mastery of the rules of composition produce a Thackeray.

Genius is creative, not created nor imitative. It follows no rules, it evolves no rules—it creates them. The man of science can analyze genius, he cannot build it up. Turner thought that the rules of colour could not be reduced to science, but he unconsciously gave expression to those very rules which he tried in vain to discover. Thus comes it that the genius has something to tell, something to teach hitherto unknown. Thus comes it that the genius is a living force in the world, and he goes on living until his genius has worked itself into the mental perceptions of the masses. His direct mission is then gone; he lives in all men, and for the rest as a beautiful memory. Shakespeare is gradually being absorbed in this manner. The thoughts of Shelley and Tennyson, being the epitomized outcome of the floating forces of

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a higher general intelligence than belonged to Shakespeare's day, will be woven into the texture of the aggregate human brain in coming centuries. Thus do the floating forces tending to a higher existence ultimately produce their voice; and thus does this voice concentrate a myriad soul-pants into one full constant throb, which beats for ever against the bosom of humanity, until it awakens a responsive heave from the hardened mass, it has at length mollified and germinated.

How greatly then does it behove the genius to be true to himself, both in his day of probation and in his hour of success. There are evil geniuses as well as good geniuses in the world. The one serves God, the other Mammon. The temptations which open up to the genius to prostitute himself are ever-pressing, and his very nature makes those temptations all the more difficult to repel. He is more keenly sentient, more keenly alive to the allurements of Mephistopheles than the ordinary mortal, and it is only by keeping his high ideal before him that he can hope to stand. Thus I say that true art is religion. Religion is distinct from theology, which has for ever claimed a separate

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and sole mission in the elevation of the masses. Religion has hitherto been subservient to theology, which is only one development of religion —and, on account of its exclusiveness and the preposterous claims it even yet puts forth, it is for the most part a baneful development of religion. *True theology* is nothing of the kind; but the world is mainly cursed with false theology—in short, ecclesiastical pride and narrowness, which are one and all the poisonous exhalations of the most unfathomable pits of corruption. It is these creeds and dogmas —whether in theology, art, or song—which blast and kill the purity and goodness in this world, and prevent poor mortals finding the road to heaven. Art is no servant to theology. True art is religion, and true religion is the *spirit* of theology, not its servant. Art demands recognition as a master, not as a servant; and art being religion, and religion being art, this is only another way of saying that religion demands to be unfettered and allowed to go free.

It behoves the genius, then, to keep himself aloof from the taint of orthodoxy, for all doxies are heresies—all are baneful, blighting, and

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blasting. It behoves him, moreover, to be true to the inner light, to the religion within him, and to escape the taint of Mammon worship. In order to show how such a man will be beset in this effort, I will sketch the career of a great artist, who shall be nameless. The little narrative is merely introduced as being the best means of further illustrating my meaning regarding Religion in Art.

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CHAPTER V.

THE CAREER OF A PAINTER.

BORN in an unsympathetic atmosphere, both so far as his family relationships and immediate externals were concerned, the painter was at first written down a dull, dreamy boy, behind others in his class, and for whom his schoolmates' pleasures seemed to have little or no attraction. "The only things he cares about, my dear sir," said his master to his father, "are poetry and drawing. I have tried to stamp out his wild ideas, and to make him a little brighter at figures; but it is no good. I am afraid your only chance is to send him to some public school where he will have to undergo hard, stern discipline, and where he will get the nonsense knocked out of him." The boy is sent to such a school. Poetry—so far as his masters can regulate that

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matter—is denied him, but figures are hammered into his head; and insomuch as drawing may be useful to him in engineering and architecture, he is allowed to develope his tastes in that direction, until it is found that instead of being content to copy cubes, prisms, scrolls, and, in short, all manner of inanimate objects, he is for ever escaping to the fields, where he reads the forbidden volumes, the concealed works of his favourite poets, and "wastes his time" not only in watching, but in endeavouring to portray, the ever changeful face of nature. On such occasions he seemed to be entirely oblivious of the flight of time, and of the effects of playing truant.

Many an anxious colloquy between the dominie and the father of the budding artist ended in the removal of the young hopeful, and his immurement in the blissful confines of an art class, there to study drawing with the view to turning it to some "practical utility." "Ah me!" said the father, "I was in hope my boy would follow some noble profession, in which he could make money, and occupy a good position in society. But now, alas! I fear, poor fellow, that he must needs sink to the level of a

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designer, decorator, or engraver, or some such poor and obscure trade."

The father is even disappointed in the progress which his son makes as a draughtsman, although he excels in the antique, which the anxious parent does not see can be of much use to him. He flatters his father's pride, however, by producing a portrait of him in a few hours—a sketch in oils—which was pronounced an excellent likeness.

But so soon as the parent has built his hopes upon his son's becoming a distinguished portrait painter, the young artist leaves the schools, and employs his time wandering about the fields, Keats in hand, or in voyaging up and down the river, all of which employments are regarded as being nothing more nor less than excuses for idleness.

The bitter experiences of the painter's life now begin, for he finds he has much to unlearn and all to learn. Having discovered, moreover, that in landscape painting the only medium for the full expression of his ideas was to be sought, he is pained to find that his productions are utterly misunderstood, that his most enthusiastic efforts are deemed but daubs,

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and spoken of as unfinished sketches; and he discovers, with many a pang of anguish, that the things which he sees and loves, and the thoughts which he nurtures, are altogether unseen, unloved, and unrealized, by those who surround him. Yearning for sympathy, and finding none, dejected and down-trodden, laughed at, and with the finger of scorn and reproach turned towards him—his work spoken of disparagingly and scornfully, and compared unfavourably with the miserable pot-boilers which bedeck the shop windows of a City or West-End "*Art*" dealer's shop, and with the trashy transcripts of the mere ordinary round of trained artists, who seek no higher aim than to acquire the skill and dexterity of some popular Academician—he has now his first serious encounter with Satan, who comes to him through his friends in a myriad voices, saying, "Fling aside this indolence, and work." Poor wretch! who has worked himself into night-sweats and tremors, and who has to thank a strong constitution, and that alone, for giving him the power to battle with his sufferings and toilsome thoughts. At last, in an evil moment, he says, "I will try; they may be right—perhaps I am

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a dreamer." He enters upon the road of prostitution. He flatters the time-serving crowd who surround him; he makes a John Wilkes appear as a Beau Brummell, a Miss Miggs as a Dolly Varden; he flunkeys alike to the rich parvenu, and the vulgar and sensual aristocrat. For the one he paints, in all its hideous splendour, his brand-new fifty thousand guinea mansion, for the other he transfers to canvas all sorts of abnormal developments in arms and in legs. He becomes, in fact, the worst of the ignoble army of pot-boilers—the fashionable pot-boiler. He stoops to accept and act upon the suggestions of his miserably gross and ignorant patrons. And for a reward, he is enabled to encase himself in luxury and in grandeur. To please and titillate his clients, his studio must forsooth reflect the skill of the upholsterer. It is furnished with meaningless *bric-à-brac*, glittering with silver and gold.

Suddenly, by one of those peculiar fortuities of life, he meets a spirit akin to his earlier aspirations. This friend has gradually discovered that the popular painter had, after all, only been disguising himself. The fact came out when the friends were examining some of

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the painter's earlier work. "Good God! man, what are you doing? you who are capable of this noble, this divine production, descending to providing gratification and amusement for a gross and purposeless crowd! Stop! stop! ere it be too late. You have already enervated yourself; return at once before you are bound hand and foot to the evil one."

"Too late! too late! Alas, it is too late!" cries the agonized painter. "Am I not mewed up beyond all possibility of escape? Have I not social obligations to perform which demand money, and am I to go back to dependence? I cannot return; I have chosen my bed—I must lie in it. Am I not a great social figure—more petted, more adored, by the best blood of England than her leading statesmen? It is true I am not happy. I pine for the sympathy of the inner few, for whom in early days I hoped to work. But I have now a whole family depending upon me. My daughters are leaders of fashion, and my sons possess the tastes called aristocratic—which tastes my money must sustain. No! I cannot desert them all."

"But surely, my friend, you could now give the world what you like; they would accept

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anything from you. It is not too late; be true to earlier and nobler ambitions; return."

"Alas! I cannot. I have so long debased my higher self; I have fed on the husks until they have changed my nature. I have tried to return, but my soul is warped, fettered, destroyed. I have sought my pleasure with the glittering crowd, and their vulgar joys have become necessary to me. I have worn the mask so long it has grown into my very features. I have put the messenger of God away from me, and he will not listen now to all my passionate entreaties. They are all futile! He does but mock me, by fitful and rapid flights past me and around me, in which moments I re-echo some feeble memories of my former self. One such flash you have seen upon my canvas, which drew you to me, and caused you to make these inquiries. Let not the subject be mentioned again between us. It is the burning brand which eats into my heart. Give it not fuel, I pray thee!"

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CHAPTER VI.

THE ARTIST IN SOCIETY.

LET us see, then, what the artist has to do with society in its conventional sense. The artist and poet must mix with men. None need more than they sympathy from, and constant friction with, the world; but they must be free to choose their own society, to take it up and to drop it, as they are moved so to do. Society should have nothing to bind them; they may be in it, of course, but not of it.

Money gives enormous power, and no man can retain his position in what are called the inner circles of society without it. These are the days of rapid fortunes, in which fortunes are recognized no matter how they are made. It is more than ever necessary, then, for the very existence of society, that the salt of painters, poets, and teachers should permeate

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it, or it must fester and rot. But the artist must never allow himself to degenerate into an ornament of the fashionable world; so soon as he does this he becomes enervated, and his mission is worse than over—he becomes absolutely a drag upon art. Society, and the ceaseless demand it makes upon man, its round of empty idolatries and observances, ought to have no place in the artist's life. He should resolutely turn his back upon them. His place is in his workshop, his studio, and with nature, animal and physical. He should enter society from the highest to the lowest; but only to study humanity and to widen his range of vision. Happily, however, there are not wanting symptoms of a coming change in the constitution of society itself. It is becoming more Bohemian, less conventional. This is, of course, greatly owing to the salt among it, of which I have written. Birth has had its day, and, unhappily, given place to money, as the test of social pre-eminence. A plutocracy is far and away a more dangerous institution than an aristocracy; but now it would seem that both are lowering their standards to the pennons of innate nobility of intellect, and of soul. The

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intellectual coteries of London society take precedence over all other coteries, be they of blue blood or yellow gold. These later coteries vie with one another to secure intellectual lions at their receptions. This state of things has its undoubted dangers, and the artist especially has to fear the influence of flattery and adulation upon his work, and upon the serious purpose of his life. He should—all teachers should—consent to join in the gaieties of the world of fashion, with the view of elevating that world, but he should never allow himself to become an exhibition. The temptations in this direction are very strong—I am not unmindful of that fact. Adulation is very soothing and enervating, folly is very contagious, and there is always a strong tendency in the human mind to rest and be thankful, and to give the world the sweepings of its brains when the world shows a disposition to be satisfied therewith. It wants a very lofty purpose and a very firm resolve to avoid these failings, these promptings of sloth and of weakness, to leave the battle of life to be fought out by younger men. Thus it is that so many of our most promising painters begin to degenerate when they should be doing

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their most mature work; or, in other words, when having received official recognition of their ability, they cease to endeavour to excel their previous productions, and are content with a perennial repetition of earlier work, which must, of course, lose force and power with every succeeding repetition.

Then the artist becomes what, unhappily, he too often starts by being, a mere picture producer and picture-seller. He paints pictures for sale; he allows caricatures of his best works to be circulated in the form of oleographs and coloured prints. He goes into competition with the trader, and thereby prostitutes his soul.

Having once embarked on this dangerous passage, there is no knowing where he will ultimately arrive—even at making designs for advertisements: he can scarcely run upon a more fatal breaker than that. Painting portraits on commission indiscriminately should be left to the "artist-photographer," who undertakes to produce an "exact and telling likeness from a faded photograph, provided the colour of the hair and eyes be given." And yet some so-called artists are little better than the artist-photographer. This portrait-painting on com-

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mission is one of the most baneful outgrowths of artistic degeneracy. Men whose coarse and brutal characteristics are clearly shown in their lineaments, are anxious to hand down to posterity a counterfeit presentment of their features which their contemporaries are hardly used enough in being compelled to contemplate. The artist pockets his pile of guineas for his assistance in insuring the coxcomb, young or old, the pleasure of indulging his vain and vulgar desire. Why do not artists of real power hold aloof from such utter debasement? Let them choose their own subjects, and not pander to egotism and self-love. The artist should endeavour to eliminate shoddiness, not become the ally and the servant of shoddy-men. I will go further: the artist, unless he be compelled by starvation to such a course—and none can deny that the pangs of hunger compel a man to debase himself, for the instinct of self-preservation is very strong in us all—should refuse to sell his pictures to those who only buy them because in their opinion they will grow into money, or because they have already become the fashion. He should only sell to those who can understand his work, and who will thus be

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certain to bring them before others who can understand it; not to be hung on walls to be gaped at by awe-struck crowds—awe-struck not at the genius of the painter, but because they envy, and in consequence honour the host, who is able to cover his rooms with five-thousand pound notes.

So soon as the artist seeks society aims and pleasures, he must become a trader. True art has nothing to do with trade. The last thing the artist should hunger for is wealth, unless wealth be construed as being a moderate competence. This is no doubt most needful to the painter, for it gives him greater power to revel in nature, and larger facilities for ease in the prosecution of his work. No really good work can be done, speaking generally, when a man is surrounded by squalor and by unrefined externals, and when his physical frame demands, and gets not, the tonic of good food and plenty of change. The artist should seek wealth only so far as it will minister to these requirements, not to bring him glitter and show, and fashionable pomp. Far be it from me to say that the artist is not better as a rich man, if he use his riches as a faithful steward to elevate the taste of his

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contemporaries. But too many use it to emulate the follies of fashion. Neither must the artist deceive himself with the threadbare sophistry that he may do evil that good may come; for the artist who achieves fame or acquires wealth at the price of prostitution, is guilty of the grossest infidelity to his mission. Possessing so glorious a mission, so much to tell, not for to-day alone, but for all ages, his desertion from the standard of truth is surely a shameful desertion. He should never think about the flesh-pots of Egypt. If wealth come to him, all well and good—let him see that he use it well; if it come not, so long as he can live without penury, still he should account himself happy; for he must remember, forsooth, that the advanced in thought in all ages have almost invariably suffered, not only from the lack of sympathy, but from the want of actual comforts.

The round of meaningless fashionable observance is very irksome to the best among those who are born to endure it, and the best and highest in the charmed throng end by wrenching their freedom. How, then, can we condone the artist's offence, seeing what he has been sent to do, if he consent to dissipate his best

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energies in the pursuit of folly? No man can do good and enduring work who is jaded in mind and in body from the effects of a perpetual revolution of balls, dinners, receptions, race-meetings, battues, and steeplechasing.

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CHAPTER VII.

ART NURTURE.

To become a successful artist, in the best sense of the word successful—by which I mean an artist whose works will not only live, but be better understood and better appreciated as years follow upon years—requires a very happy combination of talents, besides the possession of that genius which is of course a paramount necessity. Genius, by virtue of its nature, creates talents, but talents cannot create genius; although I am not so one-sided as to contend that superlative talents may not carry a man very far along the road to lasting fame, nor to deny that genius has ere now withered and died out from the very want of continuity and force to create requisite talents.

I shall not insist, however, upon the elementary qualifications demanded of a painter;

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because however defective any really great artist may have been in his earlier work as a draughtsman, colourist, or master of the rules of composition, his genius has ultimately conquered those defects, and has made each of these faculties subservient to the dictates of his mind.

Mr. Seymour Haden says, "The art faculty is innate, it cannot be acquired. It is a moral and intellectual force, which may be enhanced by cultivation, but cannot by any such means be created." By *art faculty* Mr. Haden means the power to perceive; this power the painter possesses long before he can produce, or rather long before he can successfully give to the world the reflex of his perceptions by the media of form and colour. It is the power of insight, and the strong desire to reconvey that insight, which make artists and poets. Were all men thus gifted, thus constrained, we should all be artists and poets; and in truth it is the province of the one as of the other to sow the fallow soil—the unperceiving masses—that it may bring forth fruit, or, in short, that we may thus all be somewhat of artists and poets.

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Thus comes it that genius in art is synonymous with the term "art faculty." There are many men who can see colour and form, but who at the same time cannot see beyond and behind colour and form; that is to say, they cannot pierce their esoteric mysteries. Thus, also, there are many who are ignorant of the properties of form and of colour, but who can nevertheless draw mental images from the contemplation of them. The former condition, so long as it lasts, is a hopeless condition, so far as the production of the true artist be concerned; while the latter may be overcome by nurture and culture, unless the subject be colour-blind or defective in the sense of proportion. Art nurture can do nothing if the true germ be non-existent. Of the properties of this germ I have already said something. One of its greatest attributes, if indeed it be not in a sense the germ itself, is love. This love will make all things possible to the artist. It will clarify him through pain and anguish—for art is pain and anguish—and through the travail of our souls alone do we see the glorification of any pure or beautiful purpose to which our life in this world may be conse-

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crated. The artist wants love and hope, like the old masters, to perfect his life. He must fight strenuously, possess his soul in patience, and live for the future, which will be bright for him, just in the proportion in which he so wills it. He must learn patience from the bleak moorlands and dead woods, which, viewed in faith, will pour contentment and hope into his soul.

To leave the more subtile aspects of art nurture, I will say something concerning it, in its everyday and commonplace aspect. I must be frank at once and state my deliberate opinion —arrived at after reading the lives of all great artists of this and every age, and from many other considerations. No artist has developed the very highest attributes of art who has not received external assistance, at least to the extent of being relieved of the necessity of being careful and anxious concerning his food and raiment. Murillo, it is true, was at one time reduced to the necessity of painting pot-boilers in the market-place; but he soon found powerful patronage. His work, however, cannot be said to occupy the first rank in art. The other old masters, for the most part, found

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shelter in the studios of great and generous-minded teachers; but those were the days when art was regarded as being external to all classes, to the cultured classes even, and my contentions apply more directly to the present time, when every man reckons himself a judge of pictures, and half the world can wield the brush. In such an age a man must gain great dexterity and cunning in his handiwork if it is to command a market, unknown or unrecognized, for these qualities are the only qualities patent to the eyes of the dealer. Rough, business men, guided by technicalities, they can scarcely be expected to detect genius in the early work of those, who have lived to prove that they only wanted proper stimulus to become great masters. Thus the youthful artist without means, in order that he may be able to carry on his unequal conflict with poverty, is compelled to repress his originality, which, moreover, in the case of a man so suffering, can never have any full measure of natural growth. He has no freedom to reduce his originality to method and eliminate its crudities, a most essential freedom indeed for the original thinker, for the original mind re-

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quires far more time, hard work, and loving patience to perfect itself than does that mere embodier and adapter of other men's work. Thus the artist of high aim and purpose, minus means, is compelled to enter the lists cruelly handicapped in his competition with the enormous armies of mere transcribers—men who never entertained a higher ambition than to acquire a superlative facility in the expeditious production of stereotypes for the walls.

The very originality of the struggling genius stands in his way, and retards him from meeting the requirements of the art dealer, while the dire necessity under which he labours of making that attempt, prevents him from fostering his own genius, which that very attempt is killing. It is often assumed by the unthinking that because a man is capable of excelling in the higher branches of art or science, he must necessarily be able not only to hold his own with, but actually to excel the exponents of the lower walks, of the one or the other. Such persons suppose that a Maas or a Sims Reeves could easily do what Arthur Roberts does; or that a clever diplomatist, as Lord Dufferin, could perform greater feats of hard dealing

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than the most accomplished Hebrew out of Houndsditch, if he did but care to lower himself thereto. This is not so. While it may be true that the prerogative of original thought might master any medium through which it might find expression, men whose natural gifts are cast on lowly planes may be expected to excel in those particular fields. In either case the result, great or small, is simply the outgrowth of the man's particular individuality.

Thus full oft many a noble soul attempting this impossible rivalry faints, withers, and dies by the roadside of life. A chance introduction to some one able to see the struggling germ, and willing to help its development, has ofttimes come at the eleventh hour to rescue these poor unfortunates from their impending doom—the doom of death actual, or death moral or intellectual, which is indeed the worst death.

How true is it, as Dr. Samuel Smiles says, we only hear of those who succeed. An artist whom it is my privilege to know, and who has happily long since been able to dispense with the *assistance* of that race of harpies, art dealers, was once constrained to submit a painting to a member of the miserable fraternity, and a some-

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what important member too. The dealer looked at his work. "This may be all very well, and all very true, but it will not do;" and then, pointing to the paintings around—pictures of an unobtrusive and inoffensive nature, wall decorations a grade higher than those of the ordinary suburban villa type—he added, "What I want is work of this description—quality work." My friend was happily not under the necessity of attempting to reproduce such work, a task moreover for which, for reasons already stated, he would have been eminently unequal. But, had it been otherwise with him, had he, in short, been under this necessity, he would probably have sunk by this time into the routine of making indifferent representations of indifferent work, rather than being in the far happier position of having secured the recognition of those who are able to understand him. This recognition must, in almost every instance, fall to the lot of every genuine artist who is in such a position that he can afford to wait.

That art cannot thrive where poverty exists, is not a pleasant conclusion to have forced upon one. But what can thrive where poverty exists? Love cannot; liberty cannot; life

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cannot. Poverty is man's greatest curse—let unreal preachers and poets say what they will. A popular notion obtains, that genius can force its way through all obstacles. Genius can accomplish anything short of the impossible; but even genius cannot live without nutriment, it cannot live when it has to put forth its budding life in the atmosphere of a rude and an unsympathetic world. Shelley pays a splendid tribute to "the inheritors of unfulfilled renown" in his "Adonais;" and who can doubt that the world would never have been lifted up by his beautiful songs, had his delicate and refined nature been forced to do battle with "the iron rod of penury." Out of nothing, nothing comes, and Shelley's muse would have first been killed under the blighting influence of Grub Street, and his physical being would have soon followed. He would have been only too glad to seek shelter from the world's bitter winds in the cold, but in that case sympathetic, shadow of the tomb. What crushed and debased Chatterton, but poverty? what robbed us of Girton? what impelled Morland to a degrading death, but the necessity of painting for the coarse and the brutal?

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In sympathy with, and as a necessary outgrowth of the foregoing thoughts, I will go further, and will say that in some cases, even where ample means have been present, and there has been absolutely no necessity for the youthful genius to make money immediately, yet certain painters in their earlier career have been often driven to vulgarize their art in order to gain some instant recompense, that they might prove to the sordid and mercantile minds of those who had the direct control of their fortunes that they were able to "make money" in the pursuit of art. Every one is familiar with the early trials of Turner's life, when he was knocked about from pillar to post by his father and Tom Malton, and laughed at as a dullard because of his inability to master Euclid. His agonies were intense enough then, no doubt, but they must have become ten times more unendurable when his great soul was fettered in the Academy Schools, although the wonderful generosity of the man, whose whole life was generous, is shown by his thankfulness for the small mercies, the very small mercies, he received there. The first condition of his progress, as Mr. Ruskin says, was his deter-

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mination to forget, and his power to persevere in that determination. But he could not forget entirely his early association with vulgarity, and this early association unhappily mars this grand master's work even to the last.

The poet-artist should be nursed in refinement—true refinement, not enervated luxury. The genius will outlive his early association with the crude and the uncultured, but he can never entirely disassociate himself from their blighting influence. The bloom on the peach cannot be replaced; the choice exotic which has managed to struggle into existence in an uncongenial atmosphere can never be made to equal its free-born congener, reared in its indigenous soil, by any amount of subsequent nursing in a hot-house. I may fitly add that I use the term "refined externals" in a very broad and liberal sense. The brutality of the highest social circles may warp and vulgarize the young genius who may be born into that sphere, quite as much, nay even in a greater degree, than the squalid surroundings of obscurity. There is this wide difference, however, between the two incentives to degradation. The former is far more readily escaped from than the latter.

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CHAPTER VIII.

ART CULTURE: TECHNIQUE AND STYLE.

STYLE. How elastic a word is this! How much or how little it may mean. Painters will ever have their distinguishing styles. As men's minds differ so must their styles. Styles consist in various matters, methods of treatment, codes of colour—for no two men see colour in the same way. The greater difference there may be in style in any collection of pictures, academic or otherwise, the greater will be their aggregate charm. Style expresses the mind of the painter, as men's minds are betrayed by their features, their movements, their voices, their gait. Style is only healthful as being the individual expression of one man's thoughts. Style, when it comes to mean the organization of schools, is a diseased and unnatural growth, and it ends in blindly copying the beauties and defects of great works indiscriminately. Then,

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the spirit being the only thing left out—the soul which animated the great master—the defects must of a necessity be predominant. The original spirit must for ever be wanting in the spirit of the copyist.

None the less, a copy pure and simple—professedly so, if the copyist be in sympathy with the *feeling* of the master—is by no means an object for contempt. But the copying of any master's style, in which objects are merely rearranged, and thoughts are dished up without the sauce, is, to put it temperately, entirely out of sympathy with any effort after the more perfect realization of sublimity in art. Therefore, as the greatest living etcher says, "the action of any academy founded or carried on with certain set doctrines has no other effect than to assimilate artists;" and this being so, what can we say of copyists who are not even sufficiently in sympathy with the individuality of their master to attempt to think as he thinks, but who merely rely in effecting their object upon reproducing his style in contradistinction to an actual reproduction, or, in brief, fall back upon an automatic imitation of the master's methods of manipulation.

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In this connection I may as well say how far, as it seems to my mind, schools are healthful, and how far they are hurtful; in what they help, and in what they wound art. It cannot but be both healthful and beneficial to the true interests of art, that art culture should permeate as large a proportion of society as possible. By such means latent genius is discovered, and moreover a body of cultivated persons is created, who are not only capable of being in sympathy with the highest flights of the painter's genius, but further, by raising the whole tone of society bodily, the advent of a greater number of original thinkers may be expected. Systematic and continuous training must be healthful and helpful, in that it eliminates, or at least minimizes, the crudities and absurdities of uncultured power, and supplies it with a place where its influence may be felt, in the promulgation of art sympathies. Even the genius—to whom training other than self-training, when it goes beyond its elementary and rudimentary stages, is positively baneful—may get some help from art schools, for it will teach him some primary technicalities concerning the mixing and manipulation of colours, and thus save him the labour,

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and economize the time which would be consumed by him, had he to discover these methods for himself. It will, moreover, supply him with material upon which he may work. The original artist is in no wise dependent upon such teaching, for he will find his own methods sooner or later for himself. To be a genius is only another way of saying that such a one has strong powers of perceiving and assimilating all that will be useful to him in securing his expansion and development.

There is yet another very healthful influence which a school of art may be expected to exercise. It will teach the needful lesson to many, that indolence has nothing in common with genius, that wild distortions and crude absurdities have no commune with genius. It will tend to spare the world these prolonged inflictions, and may ultimately force the would-be inflictors to desist altogether from the prosecution of folly and content themselves with doing the henchman's work in art—if, indeed, they are fitted for that even. Moreover, schools of art will train a race of painters who can produce work useful to the multitudes; work which, although it may not possess any claim to the distinction of

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enunciating fresh thought or inspiration, may yet serve to supply the very limited requirements of the masses, who of course cannot be expected to understand really serious work, and who, moreover, were they ever so capable of understanding it, would still be quite unable to obtain possession thereof. Moreover, the human mind is constituted so strangely, that a strong passion for actual possession is one of its most pronounced features. This passion even goes to the length of controlling men, ever so alive to the beauties of Turner or Lawson, Constable or Wyllie, Wilkie or Leader, to desire the actual possession of pictures, albeit those pictures within the scope of their means may half horrify them, and notwithstanding the fact that the works of their favourite masters may, for the most part, be seen in our public galleries. This is a strange anomaly, as applied to the cultured but unwealthy patrons of art. Lower in the social scale, I believe there are many true lovers of art; and a few isolated appreciators of the greatest sublimities of which art is capable are scattered about among the very residuum of society, so far as social position and riches be concerned. But how can we blame any of

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these for apathy or for lining their walls with abominations, when we insist upon closing their only sources of art enjoyment and art culture on the one day in which they are free to inspect them. However, all said and done, the instinct of actual possession is the instinct responsible more than any other for the mass of rubbish falsely called art, with which this country is inundated. I do not say the wish of possession is altogether an unhealthy instinct. It is not only an excusable trait of character, but has many most happy tendencies. It is an abnormal development of the passion with which I cross swords, and with that only.

So much for the complete or partial benefits of academy training.

But it cannot be regarded as an unmixed blessing, since only to the comparatively few among those who might be willing to undergo the routine and oppression of such a training, and who may be desirous of gaining admission to, and reaping the benefits of, such a course in our leading art schools, is such admission possible. It would be absurd to assert that all who fail, from whatsoever cause, to pass the preliminary examination for admission to such

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schools, are thereby proved to be incapable of art work. It may be reasonably supposed that to some, and by no means the least gifted art students, the processes of preparation are irksome, and act in a manner to deter the expansion of their faculties in the direction of work which they are impelled to do, and to do quickly, by the power of the art faculty within them. For such as these—and *all* really great artists come under this description—the devotion of some of the best years of their life in efforts to master the requirements of a hard and fast curriculum, which demands the monotonously careful production of a drawing from the antique, and which exacts similar requirements, which I need not enumerate, are almost sufficient to throw to the ground the beacon of art altogether, or, at all events, to obscure for them its guiding rays. For if, say they, I am to devote precious years of my life to ceaseless drudgery in the mere acquirement of a certain amount of hand cunning, which, moreover, will be of no practical use to me; and further, since I am by no means certain that I shall ever gain sufficient dexterity to meet the requirements of the examiners, I will withdraw from the unequal

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contest, and I will seek life and light elsewhere. I will find my own sources of life and light. I will study in my own schools.

And if the ordinary student may often only too justly entertain such feelings towards certain art schools, what must be the emotions of him who feels the power of genius bestirring itself within him? What must he suffer when he seeks admission to the schools of what should be his natural mother—the great centre of art for this great empire? What must he feel—he who ought by right to have a voice in the management and direction of this very institution—he who has been sent, may be, to re-mould it, or to destroy it! What can be his reflections, when he finds that in order to enter these schools, he is required to satisfy an exacting tribunal, and to demonstrate qualifications which he cannot but look upon as almost childish! Is he not tempted to think that these exactions are in themselves a proof of weakness and paucity of genius on the part of the governing body of that institution itself? for it requires a genius to detect a genius, and the whole system of examination for admission must appear to him like the indolent and

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discreet subterfuge of a body, unable or unwilling to discover a would-be student's present qualifications or proleptic promise.

And is he not right in regarding the test as almost beneath his contempt? For what are the puerilities or senilities which are demanded of him? He, who may be able in half an hour to produce the required drawing, be it in pencil or in chalk, instinct with a life and meaning which the whole host of entered students might strive for years to emulate and fail miserably, despite the assistance of forty loaves of bread and fifty cakes of indiarubber; he, to be required to study every irregularity of the surface of his paper so that his pencil may not diverge from the exactitude of mathematical precision by one-tenth part of a hair's breadth—although he knows full well that the province of the artist has nothing to do with the reproduction of objects in their very similitude, but rather to use actual objects partly as checks upon, and partly as interpreters of, his inner consciousness. And yet he is required to bend his energies to the mastery of accomplishments so feminine, or rather effeminate; to be bound by trivialities so miserable. Is it remarkable, in view of these

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facts, that such men as Lawson and Rossetti shook the dust off their feet and would have nothing to do with such training? Picture, too, a Cecil Lawson, forsooth, spending three years of his life sitting on a stool at the British Museum, or any of the art schools which *prepare students* for the Academy, copying the antique; and imagine still further that great soul mewed up for another three years at the Academy schools, the whole of this time and energy expended in the fruitless task of endeavouring to become what the world calls an accurate draughtsman. Not only would he have failed in this—for Lawson's genius lay in a very different direction—but the soul-pangs of such a life must even earlier have developed the germs of that fatal malady which ultimately claimed him for its own. And even had he not died under the thraldom, how much time would have remained to him to give to the world that undying work with which he has endowed it? He could never have become the great landmark in English art which he has become, for his originality would have been cramped—seeing that he died in early manhood, and the few years remaining to him after going

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through this course must have been consumed in unlearning that which he had learned.

There are many other notable painters, of whom the case of Lawson is only a type. No, no! the Academy schools is no place for a genius, and least of all for a landscape painter; and as landscape painting is, so I contend, the only medium for the fitting expression of what Mr. Wyke Bayliss calls "the higher life in art," it follows that the Academy schools as they are at present constituted can do little to assist real art, even in its earlier phases of development, unless those phases are taken to include mere rudimentary technicalities. The Academy Schools is an admirable medium for the production of mediocrities, and, as many a genius has been forced into the schools by unthinking or unwise parents, it may be said to be an admirable institution for thwarting the development of genius, if not for actually destroying it. The whole system of imitative art, upon which the examination for the Academy is based, is unhealthy and corrupt, and untrue to the spirit of real art. I will again quote from one who has written on this matter more lucidly than I could hope to

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succeed in doing. Mr. Seymour Haden, to whom I allude, says, "I attach no value to technical education or what tradition teaches."

"Too minute a rendering in matters of art is bad. Such a process means an extension of the work over long passages of time, which must tend to weaken the primary ideas and conceptions of the artist. The great masters knew this and worked rapidly, *knowing full well that if the sacred fire once languished it could not be re-illumined.*"

In brief, then, to sum up this matter—this mighty controversy concerning systems and schools, styles and training. System, to be of any use, must be the evolution of the experience of the individual man, and only so can it be in any sense helpful to the development of real art. It is absurd to compare one man's system to that of any other man, and to say the one is right and the other is wrong, or the one is better than the other. Just in the measure that a system may be the outgrowth of the soul of the inner man, the system, indeed, which lends itself most readily to the interpretation of his thought, will it be pure and lofty, real and faithful; and just so far as it may

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be a servile reflex of the thoughts of another, so far will it be mean, paltry, and debased.

Then as to method, there are certain elementary methods, and although I for one strongly believe that the inverse method to that which is generally accepted is the soundest method, yet I should be far from saying that that method was to be dictated to everybody. In the highest work in art I believe it is essentially necessary to *harden up* a picture rather than to *soften it down*, which would mean that the various stages of the picture should be thus evolved: (1) composition, (2) tone, (3) colour, (4) form, (5) drawing. Can my heresy go further than this?

And in the matter of finish—finish the fetish—in the form of false finish, at which the Royal Academy worships. Finish is only true finish when the labour ends, when the desiderated impression is conveyed: all further work upon a picture to produce *prettiness*—that fell abomination—debases art to mere mechanism, and is really untruthful, mean, and despicable.

This being so, the test examination for the Royal Academy may be considered to be designed—unwittingly, no doubt—to stamp out

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genuine art, and very much of the subsequent training may be fairly described to have the same tendency.

These facts are largely answerable for the impression, which cannot fail to strike the intelligent critic upon entering any exhibition of the Royal Academy, which I once heard innocently expressed thus: "Oh! what an industrious man! what a tremendous amount of work he has done: he has produced a magnificent picture shop!"

I shall have more to say in this connection shortly.

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CHAPTER IX.

REALISM IN ART.

It is not given to many, even among those who are generally considered to be best versed in art, to think of a painter in any other light than as a skilfully accurate delineator of natural objects. This is very far from being the case; and, although I have insisted upon this fact before, I shall insist upon it again and again, as it is too popular and widespread a heresy to allow me to fear that I can tilt at it too often, and because its effects are so grievously at variance with the progress of real art.

It would appear to the vulgar, who think in this way, that upon the maturity of certain methods, which may be expected when perfected to result in the creation of a process of instantaneous photography, and photography in colours, the mission of the landscape painter will be

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over. If I have written to any purpose, I have, I hope, already demonstrated, not only how impossible it is for the niceties of mechanical perfection to produce anything which will rival the higher forms of poetic art, but, moreover, that they can never enter into competition with faithful expositions of the least imaginative branches of art.

The realistic school of painting may be regarded as the outgrowth of errors akin to the foregoing. It proposes to give us as nearly as possible a servile representation in pigments of actualities and crudities.

How utterly out of accord with any true feeling of poetic art is this, since in nature countless deformities and crudities have come into being, from the intervention of man in the handiwork of God. Nor is nature itself invariably beautiful; and where its greatest beauties exist, they are as nought to the unappreciative mind; while the intensely appreciative mind pictures them as far more lovely than mere actualities can make them, because of its power of suppressing here, and accentuating or filling in there. To be concise, the yokel sees nothing to gape at in the most glorious sunset.

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The poet feels far more than the mere sensuous rapture of such sunset; it suggests to him all manner of fancied forms and colours, not actually to be found in that upon which he gazes; all manner of metaphysical pictures and poems, and foreshadowings of that ideal world in which his higher being has its existence.

The poet-painter must remove or obliterate, forget, in fact, the existence of crudities and deformities in nature, if, indeed, he would find in nature a fitting medium for the portrayal of his inspiration, since it is not his province to hurt and to wound by unmasking error and sin—that is the preacher's province; but his business is to elevate and sublimate by holding up the beautiful, the idealistic, for admiration and for worship.

As bearing upon my contention, I may here narrate an incident in the life of that great painter, John Linnell, which has come to my knowledge. He was showing some ladies his gallery of pictures in his house surrounded by the Surrey hills, and to their questions, "And what place may this be, I pray?" and "Where did you paint this from?" and to such sage interjections and suppositions as "Surely this is

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such and such a farm, or such and such a hill," John Linnell submitted with admirable patience and temper; while he endeavoured to satisfy their curiosity. At length, as they were standing before one of those marvellous productions of his genius, a fresh query completely exhausted the measure of his patience, and he burst forth in answer, with passionate vehemence: "This—did you ask what this is from? What matters from what it was painted; it is no concern of mine, or of yours. It is from above; it is inspired. All true art cometh from above, and cannot be trammelled by the height of the tower at Lord So-and-so's house, nor is it concerned with the fact, that such and such a place appears to be a splendid situation for a picnic." Linnell only had to suffer that which falls to the lot of every artist worthy the name. He is continually being asked similar questions to those which agonized that great master, and I shall rest content if my feeble efforts can effect something towards the elimination of such senseless babble.

To further illustrate the error of realism, it may be noted how widespread is the belief that poetry is a distinct and separate quality from

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art. The author of this work has often been met with the remark, "What has poetry to do with art?" To my mind it has everything to do with it; if a painting be not a poem—didactic, epic, lyric, what you please—but if it be not some kind of poem, or, in other words, a beautiful and harmonious conceit of the mind, set forth in colour, I cannot see what function it can perform which might not as readily have been discharged by a punchinello or a harlequin, whose only aim is to amuse and to tickle the senses.

But do not let me be misunderstood. I am not upholding exclusively the weird, wild, and visionary at the expense of all else that is beautiful; far less am I in sympathy with any effect which may be produced at the expense of truthfulness. Divorce truth from art, and you turn Penelope into Helen.

The painter must ever go to nature, and study her in the spirit of love and devotion. It is in the faculty of selection, of reserving the really beautiful for treatment, that the power of the great artist is shown. He must be a suppressor and a suggester, an adapter as well as an interpreter. In this the power of Cecil Lawson

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was shown. His realism was idealistic and truthful; poetry was recognized to the full. He dealt with the greatest of realities, which the indolent world dismisses as unrealities.

But, truthfulness *so-called*, which takes the form of parading realities which were much better suppressed, is no truthfulness at all. Truth is harmony and charity, and, as Thackeray has wisely said, there are no more uncharitable and malign persons than those who are for ever publishing ugly scandals in the cause of truth. Thus the realism which devotes itself to the representation of vice, squalor, grossness, and vulgarity is to my mind the antithesis of high art. It has its undoubted uses, but when it lays claim to be the standard by which all art should be gauged and judged, it becomes positively harmful. Anyhow, it is not beautiful; and although it is a true axiom that the useful must in a sense be beautiful, this is only a figure of speech when we are dealing with the sublime and beautiful in their very highest forms, not merely with the less subtile and more apparently utilitarian aspect of the beautiful.

Moreover, there are some highly esteemed

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works of art, so-called, of the strongly realistic school, which to my mind cannot even claim the aforesaid distinction, of being in any degree or in any respect useful. For what can be justly advanced in favour of pictures whose whole aim seems to be the representation of vulgarity? The bald interior of a sponging-house, the hideous custom of throwing rice after a bridal party, the crudeness and utter shoddiness of a modern drawing-room, the thoroughly unpoetical aspect—unpoetical in any high sense of the word—of a race meeting, the hideous grouping of an Indian durbar—these, and such as these, have of course their lowly uses, but they become far more pronouncedly bad than merely useless, when their claims are put forward, notonly to a superlative, but to a pre-eminently superlative, place in art. It is necessary beyond everything to expose the fallacy of so unhealthy an assumption, for if it is allowed full play, real art will be crushed out and stamped upon.

Mr. Ruskin, we know, was in his early days a defender of the pre-Raphaelite school of painting. This course he took because in those

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days there was a spirit of unreality abroad, and the tendency was to endeavour to copy the mistiness of Turner as apart from his mysticism. Such being so, Mr. Ruskin did a most healthful work. Times change, and we change with them. In the present day it cannot be gainsaid, that some among the school of painters known by the term "impressionists," mistake unreality and bad drawing for genius; unmeaning chaos of thought for idealism. An impressionist in the true sense of the word is the artist in his highest stages of development; but unhappily many self-styled impressionists are one of two things—hard rocks which will receive no impression, or soft sand upon which the impression is hazy and fleeting.

In conclusion, I cannot better expose the fallacy of this modern realistic school, which is striving to be recognized as the exponent of true art, than by remarking that if the object be merely to copy nature, why not have done with attempting the impossible and go to nature itself? There is no pigment which can reproduce the light of the sun. Turner attempted it in vain. There is no flake-white which is

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not many degrees lower in tone than the whiteness of nature. True art can only suggest, can only sympathize. Realism carried to its legitimate conclusion is not only an impossibility, but an absurdity.

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CHAPTER X.

ART CANT: ÆSTHETICISM.

HAVING in the preceding chapter endeavoured to prove, that Art begins where *Realism* leaves off, I shall now address myself to the consideration of certain other diseases and maladies to which the study and practice of art are incidental. Affectation in art is perhaps the most hurtful of these maladies. It not only warps, it destroys art. Mr. Ruskin, in speaking of Prout's drawings, says: "But note that the first condition of all these really great drawings (as, indeed, of all other goods) is unaffectedness. If ever Prout strains a nerve, or begins to think what other people will say or feel . . . he falls into fourth and fifth-rate work directly." Of all forms of affectation, that of the imitator is the most hurtful. It is this, as has already been said, which eats into the very life of the young

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artist, who is for ever endeavouring to paint something that the hanging committee will approve; and when this is the case, how can a man be original?

It is a common mistake to confuse mannerism with affectation. By affectation in art I mean solely *seeming* and not *being*. All art is affected which is borrowed, and which is not the spontaneous expression of the personality of the individual painter. And since so many men attempt to be painters, and call themselves artists, who are in no wise original thinkers, affectation in art is a very general malady. A picture should be a distinct realm of thought. The painter whose ambition is to paint as well as somebody else, or like somebody else, be his model ever so pre-eminent, ever so worthy of admiration, is, strictly speaking, no artist; for an artist must be a creator. Art should not be reduced to mere reproduction. Unhappily where there is one man who strives to give expression to his own individuality, there are hundreds who are content to follow, and whose great aim is to be able "to paint as well as" Alma Tadema, Vicat Cole, Keeley Halswelle, Cecil Lawson, Leader, or some other great master. They are

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for ever asking themselves, "When shall I be able to do work like" So-and-so's, or So-and-so's? They worship the artist instead of God, the fountain instead of the fountain-head. We may give them credit in a majority of instances for no worse weakness than blind hero-worship, and the narrowness of thinking any achievement whatever ultimate; but is there not too often a little of the coarser clay of mere golden-calf adoration, mixed up in this attitude—the deification of success?

Such affectation is inevitable because originality is rare. It may be helpful in that it tends to perfect methods for the henchmen of art. For women especially, who practise art, it is helpful; for women were not intended by nature to be original in the broadest sense of the term; that is to say, they should be the recipients and perfecters of methods, not their creators. Women are supplemental to man, and when a woman is original she is in a certain sense no woman at all. It is not said that no women are original, but that being so, they must of a necessity relinquish the characteristics which distinguish women in the aggregate. It is not maintained that it is not very healthful and very

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expedient that they should do this in certain instances. But, as a broad and general fact, women are intended to supply man's deficiencies, to afford him the needful rest in which he may nurture and mature his thought and his strength; and, in short, to be his natural complement. A woman who thinks originally must be a leader, and she must therefore stand alone, or be mated to a clown, for no real man can submit to be led either by a man or a woman. Clever and original women are often mated to clowns, and the system generally works very well in these isolated instances; but the natural position of the sexes is then reversed, and the woman is the man, and the man the woman. For the rest, an original woman is a very abnormal growth, and in putting on the insignia of manhood she is cut off, in a measure, from the natural delights of womanhood. This is a broad axiom admitting of exceptions. An original man and an original woman may be well mated; but for obvious reasons such a result cannot be generally anticipated. An original man requires the sympathy of a clever, appreciative woman, because in his dual existence he seeks the needful rest to refur-

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bish him for the fight of life. But to possess an original wife, whether her originality be in the same direction as his own or not, must necessitate unrest and disquietude. Therefore, I say, in dealing with broad issues—and this book affects no concern with any others—that affectation in art is alone healthful when it supplies a subordinate or feminine requirement. All art which stops short of creating for itself must necessarily be effeminate.[1]

My contentions are directed to one object—not to maintain that affectation in art is hurtful when copying is alone possible, but to attack the disease when it fastens itself upon men of real originality, warping their powers and preventing them from declaring their mission. Some fatal weakness could alone foster the development of that germ. The atmosphere

[1] I wish to remark that, as concerning women, I go much further than do most advocates of the rights of women, notwithstanding what I have written above. I believe in the wisdom and fairness of giving them perfect equality with men on all points. It seems to me, moreover, that female-artists are very hardly used in not being included in the academic body. There are many leading lady-artists who are eminently entitled to the distinction. Besides, if women are not often original, they are more discriminating, discerning, and appreciative than are men.

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congenial to the growth of such germs needs purification, and such an atmosphere is common to all art schools.

Let it not be supposed, however, that I am oblivious of the fact that all original men, no matter how great their genius, are immensely indebted to the work done by their predecessors, not so much in learning from them methods, but in that every great man sets afloat elements of greatness which make the advent of other great men a foregone conclusion, and prepare the way for them, when they shall come. It would be impossible to trace the various influences at work which resulted at length in the evolvement of a Turner—from a soil, too, apparently so uncongenial. But who can doubt that those influences were at work, or that the germs which combined to make that great man's genius had been nursed and nurtured, and passed hither and thither, through countless ages, until he was called forth by a happy combination of circumstances, and the inner heavings and mute longings of multitudes, to whom such a voice had become an absolute necessity? These aspirations and these longings may be said in a sense to have created

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Turner, for in all ages an ardent desire and prayer for a voice to give expression to that which had been inexpressible, though deeply felt, has met with its reward. Thus, while Turner was created by the aggregate strength of the efforts and outpourings—individually weak—of the masses, he in his turn created new aspirations after, and new conceptions of, the beautiful. The strength of many had striven to produce him, and he came as a strong man to fight for, and make existence possible for, other thinkers and teachers. In this sense it may be said that the need produced Turner, and Turner renewed and intensified the need, and so made the advent of a Cecil Lawson possible. For in the broadest sense Lawson is greatly in advance of Turner, in that he reflects in his work the enormous strides which thought has made in breadth and in depth, in width and in height, during the epoch which has transpired since Turner's death.

And these two men supply me with examples whereby to illustrate my next point—the distinction between mannerism and affectation. Turner, so long as he permitted his mind to be trammelled by the desire to rival Claude—a

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desire, moreover, which he never fully held in subjection—produced work marred and dwarfed by this very desire. Cecil Lawson, while not unmindful of the teaching of his predecessors, went to nature for his inspiration, and never allowed his work to be directly influenced by any mind other than his own. Thus his work is entirely free from the taint of affectation, although he is a prince among mannerists, as indeed originators, in whatsoever walk of life, must inevitably be.

Affectation is to genius a blight, a curse, a doom. Mannerism, in the true meaning of the word, is life, blessing, and the insignia of power.

How can it be possible for men to advance, if they follow blindly faithful to the great masters, who have worked out their own light, and given basement for the building up of the noble edifice of art, but certainly have not finally determined the limits of that which is inexhaustible?

I desire to say a few words in concluding this chapter about a very recent form of art affectation; namely, sham æstheticism. True æstheticism, which the very vulgar, that is to say, the totally unrefined, ridicule, and the vulgar

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of a higher social grade—who would be enlightened were not their darkness almost impenetrable — have copied and distorted, has nothing to do with the abnormal growth of recent years falsely called æstheticism. But the unnatural excrescence can only flourish where the healthy life exists, and it reduces itself to the problem, Is the healthy life strong enough to throw off the disease which has attacked it, or will it succumb to that disease? The leaders of this modern æsthetic movement doubtless intended something very different to that which was ultimately foisted upon them; and although they cannot be said to have entirely escaped the taint of the malady which fastened itself upon their life-work, yet who can deny that all honour is due to Mr. Oscar Wilde and his friends for having strangled out of existence some at least of the grosser crudities of our everyday environment? Have they not done something towards teaching us that decoration is offensive and nauseating when it goes beyond the useful? Decoration should never be ornate; such decoration is repulsive and sickening to the cultured mind. The only truly useful end of which decoration admits, is to assist in the

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attainment of rest, or, in other words, harmony. The *pretty*, the glittering, everything, in fact, which bespeaks pomp, vanity, or petty pride, is eminently unrestful. It is, in short, mere vulgar affectation, and is therefore entirely foreign to the true spirit of art.

So soon as art gets into the hands of the tradesman it becomes merely decorative, decorative in a debased sense. It must be made costly. Thus I am constrained to say, that art must live distinct from trade if it is to avoid affectation, if it is to live at all. There can be no real sympathy between the two. Art is intangible: it concerns itself with hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, poetry and idealism, music and harmony, sweetness and light. Commerce is tangible: it demands what it is pleased to style facts—hard, dry facts—realities, glittering gold, but all these are after all, for the most part, comfortless unrealities—for grasping, sordid ambitions defeat themselves and debase man, driving him further and further from any power to approach the sublime, the only reality life affords. It is the province of art to bring the sublime into men's lives; and can anything be so real as sublimity—faith, charity, and love?

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CHAPTER XI.

THE PROGRESS OF ART IN ENGLAND.

It has been often asserted and currently accepted that were every man a genius, recognition would come to none, distinction to none, pre-eminence to none. The last supposition may be tolerably correct; but genius stands alone; and were every man a Genius, every man would have ten thousand times the measure of recognition which falls to the lot of genius under existing circumstances. Of course I am conjuring up an impossible Utopia, and my contention is nothing more than a *reductio ad absurdum;* but it will serve to emphasize that which is to follow. Genius, instead of being general, is rare, and the power of appreciating genius is not too common. Thus the original thinker has to depend for recognition upon another or upon other original thinkers, who, having gained

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recognition, may have the generosity to acknowledge unrecognized genius in others. These are the men who share with social magnates, and the noble army of reviewers and critics, the power to make or to mar. It often happens, however, that a worthless charlatan is, either designedly or ignorantly, extolled as a prodigy, and not a few real geniuses die unknown, never having the good fortune to secure the proclamation of their abilities on the part of any of these great powers. Men are not original. They fear to pronounce in favour of anything until society or professional experts have given their verdict. Nevertheless, I am free to admit that there was never a time when merit had so good a chance of being recognized as the present, for it is more possible now than heretofore, to break down the barriers of prejudice or misfortune.

In order to sift the chaff from the wheat in art matters, it is necessary to remember that merely styling one's self an artist does not constitute any claim to that distinction. Very few art students will actually follow the mere external career of art for any lengthened period of their lives, and very few of those who do so will

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ever be artists. Students in recognized institutions are especially unlikely to have the real making of artists in them. In judging of this matter, we must consider with what manner of, or lack of, enthusiasm the students may be fired. For in parallel cases, how many men enter the legal profession, bent upon improving the laws of their country! how many go into the Church, desirous beyond everything of lifting men out of the slough of vice! how many adopt the pursuit of medicine, honestly desirous of alleviating human suffering! or how many espouse the dramatic calling, anxious before every other consideration to show up vice in all its hideousness, and to hold up virtue to admiration! In literature, art, and music, like queries might be advanced; and although one may be skilful and successful in either of these callings, yet how lamentably one may fall short of any real right to be identified with one or any.

Again, although it may be said of artists, that taking them in the aggregate, they are more sympathetic and enlightened than ordinary men, yet it cannot be denied that studio life is too often but a reflex of hospital life or college life,

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with all its round of stupid revelries and debaucheries, and of senseless practical jokes. In fact, the Bohemianism of which certain *artists* would seem to be proud, is nothing better than gross vulgarity, which should bring shame with it. Artists who systematically debase themselves in this way are unworthy of the name of artists, for the true artist should hold himself aloof from the base and unworthy pursuits and pastimes of the unthinking crowd, and endeavour to surround himself alone, with that which is refined and cultured. The existence of so many unworthy artists in this country is no fair augury for the progress of art in England, and, in good sooth, as a nation, no people among civilized races could be so grossly inartistic as are we, although the inner circle of artists and art sympathizers is perhaps as healthy an organization as any extant.

What can be said for the art feeling of a nation which tolerates the barbarities, enormities, and defacements of which I shall now give a few instances?

The whole system of mourning from begin ning to end is intensely barbaric. The sable mummeries of a funeral, the black crape of

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the widow, the sincerity of whose grief a simple person unacquainted with the idiosyncrasies of *civilization* might be excused for doubting, on account of the outward display affected. Real grief should court no widespread sympathy, for real grief is so jealous it can scarcely share its woe with the most kindred of spirits. On a par with this blighting influence—the love of ostentatious mourning—are our hideous memorials to the dead, not only in our cemeteries, but also in the form of effigies—examples of the sculptor's art—with which our public thoroughfares are occasionally, happily not very frequently, *adorned.* Of a like nature, and equally unworthy, are the so-called seasonable festivities of Christmas. If there be any sense in anniversary rejoicings, surely the noble mission and grand work of Christ are debased by hideous pantomimes—immoral and demoralizing—and by utterly unbecoming riotings of all kinds. The widespread diffusion and popularity of oleographs, although when concerning the very vulgar they may be healthful, as showing some crude awakening to tastes a little beyond the desire for mere animal gratification, cannot but be regarded as disheartening when we find

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them in the mansions of the wealthy, who should know that mechanical reproductions, of however fine a work, can never contain the essential elements of beauty, and that ideas which are symbolized in the original by countless tones and semitones of colour, must become utterly meaningless when their reproduction is insanely attempted, by the medium of some dozen arbitrary colours.

Again, the hideous exteriors and interiors of our modern houses, and the miserable ostentation of modern methods of life. How unrestful! how inartistic! how vulgar! The crude abominations of fashionable dances and dinners, and the cruel rage for floral decorations—flowers beautiful in themselves, meaningless clustered together, and which, when they have done duty to enhance the importance of the peer and the plutocrat, ultimately, in a condition more or less faded, reach the houses of humble middle-class imitators. Let me mention, moreover, the unrestfulness of a modern dining-table, overloaded with embellishments; and the apotheosis of the palate, until, like all false idols, it treacherously betrays us altogether. Surely the dining-room, and the dinner and its appoint-

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ments and its accessories, should be so ordered as to conduce to quietude and mental rest. Even pictures of the highest calibre, those requiring study and thought, are inaptly placed in a dining-room. They should be excluded, as calculated to keep the brain active and excited, in the same way and for the same reasons as politics and religion are tabooed at prandial entertainments. Mental rest at food is eminently necessary, and small talk at dinners, easy, unconstrained, unthoughtful conversation, is alone in good taste. For neither in the turmoil of exciting discussion, nor in the solitude of wearying reflections, can the mind get rest. And the mind requires rest when the digestion has to work. Hence your thinking men are invariably dyspeptics. They cannot rest at their meals, and certainly the environment of modern fashionable life offers them no assistance. Again, let me instance the love of brilliancy and of gloss on furniture, the utter discomfort of the constantly redecorated, refurnished houses of the wealthy, combined with the old-maidish passion for neatness and *prettiness* at the expense of harmony and unobtrusive quietude. Moreover, the passion for new clothes and for

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constant changes in dress, the inartistic ceremonials of High Church services, and the utter abominations which fall to our lot in Low Church and Dissenting establishments, are neither calculated to inspire feelings of worship nor adoration; for the offence they give to the better senses precludes the possibility of the mind being given over to the sublime. Add to this the hideousness of stucco terraces and cardboard houses, each of which must have its lying, canting, hypocritical little room set aside as a *drawing-room*—or, in other words, its company room—in which the mistress of the house vies with her visitors as to which can make the other feel the more uncomfortable; in fact, I might include the miserably conventional and unsatisfactory nature of all drawing-rooms, which even in the houses of the *cultured* have too often little to recommend them. For what is more abhorrent to the refined taste than the depraved paper-hangings, "ornamented" with "pretty" gold festoons and flowers on mawkish grounds, common to our drawing-rooms, set off by the everlasting tottering tables and childish *bric-à-brac*, which we can only avoid knocking over by making up our minds to consecrate

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one's best energies to the task. To turn from our interiors to our exteriors, we find the walls of our streets covered with coloured prints, each trying to outblazon the other with its lying proclamation, Cheap! Cheap! Best! Best! constituting yet another indication of a hollow, insincere age. Added to this, sandwich men and street organs, German bands and vulgar "Ethiopians," theatres hideous without—to wit, the Alhambra—and betinselled and bespattered with frivolous indecencies and crudities within. At Kensington the sordid worship of gold is exemplified, and it is carried to the length of gilding the monument of a great and good man and public benefactor, from whose representation those who can best value his goodness are compelled to turn away, so repulsive an exhibition of burnished vulgarity is here heaped upon his memory. The same utter want of artistic feeling is displayed in the gilded Mercurys and Venuses which *adorn* our mantelpieces; and again, in the barbarities of the Lord Mayor's Show; and once more, in the utterly ungraceful structure which has taken the place of Temple Bar, resembling nothing so much as a magnified match-box, after it had

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undergone the process of adornment at the hands of a child, with the accessories—a few valentines torn to pieces and a gum bottle. Still further, the meaningless and positively offensive façade opposite Hyde Park Corner, at the entrance to the Row—a lean and senseless deformity; the heavy pomp of the much vaunted St. Paul's cathedral, with its misplaced statues to departed heroes—if, indeed, all memorials to public men are not vulgar and debased; for the really great man desires no memorials, and would not wish to be remembered when he had outlived his mission, or when, in fact, his work for posterity had been fully accomplished. Add to these relics of barbarity the inharmonious jangling of church bells—which, in populous districts, at least, renders Sunday a perfect Babel to those who have sensitive ears — and the cold, hard, unlovableness of most of our churches' exteriors, no less than of the creeds upheld within their walls; and bearing in mind the intolerable deformities women are compelled to become in following the dictates of fashion, the barbarity of sport, when it is made all-consuming and is allowed to rob our air of birds and our

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poor of food; and I have enumerated a few, a very few, among the many, of the most salient and unhappy symptoms which go to show too plainly how little real progress, any real feeling for art, has been made in England. Were there any true and widespread appreciation of the beautiful in this country, the nation would rise up in rebellion against one and all of the abominations I have named.

Unfortunately art is regarded too much in the light of the "pretty," with which, in sooth, it hath no concern whatsoever. Art is looked upon as being something external to ordinary men, something to be thought about when one has made "a lot of money." Then the English parvenu sets his energies to work to procure pictures. If he be unambitious he will content himself with so many wall decorations—the gleanings of shop-front windows; if he be desirous of being considered a man of taste he endeavours to discover men who are regarded as being rising artists, and he snatches up their work at the lowest market prices, not with the desire to relieve them from anxious cares concerning money, so that they may do better work, but with the desire to possess himself of pictures

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which will increase in value. This is his ambition, this, and the ambition to procure the works of great artists at a cheaper rate than can his friends. Men who think that it is time enough to turn their attention to religion when they have obtained a fortune by the total disregard of its most elementary teachings, naturally regard art, which they falsely believe to be something very much lower than *religion*, in the same light.

It may safely be concluded, that that man is no lover of art who is continually talking about the money value of his pictures. Such men put pictures on their walls in the same spirit that Mr. Murdle put jewels upon his wife's breast, and society applauds in the one instance as in the other. They discourse upon the relative merits of pictures, as they would discourse upon the relative merits of their horses or their wines. Such comparisons are odious and disgusting. One cannot compare a Ruskin and a Beaconsfield, one cannot compare primroses and violets; the one may appeal to your fancy more than the other, but how are you to say the one is better than the other? No tribunal has decided these cases, and no tribunal ever can decide them.

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CHAPTER XII.

ART STRUGGLES.

In England we have a tribunal which claims to decide as to the merits of art works; a tribunal, however, composed of arbiters, many of whom have obtained their positions by the aid of qualities very widely different from those which go to make an artist. Some of these qualities are entitled to respect—business-like qualities, tact and diplomacy, push and hard work. Others are the less commendable traits of flunkeyism to high-placed men, or of ruthless selfishness in making use of all struggling men who may cross one's path. Imagine the absurdity of a man, whose idea of the beautiful, or at least of art, lies in the representation of saturnalia, of vice haunts, or of the vulgarities of popular fête-days, being in a position to accept or to reject the works of a Rossetti or a Cecil

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Lawson. Be he ever so honest, his habits of thought would make an unbiassed judgment impossible.

It may be true, and it has doubtless often been exemplified, that rejection on the part of the hanging committee is rather helpful to the young artist than otherwise. It may goad him to do better and better work, until he compels recognition from those who would be blind if they could. On the other hand, the weak and the sensitive are killed, or at least their art is killed, by repeated rejections. I never pass Burlington House without thinking what a wealth of blood it has upon its head—I use this expression hyperbolically as well as literally. The young artist is compelled to scrap and to *pot-boil*, and is forced into unworthy means of gaining a livelihood by his brush. The danger is that by so doing he may drive his better angel from him. I quote a passage, as bearing upon this point, from the letter of an artist, then young and unknown, but who has since obtained distinction. At the time this letter was written he seemed to be in danger of succumbing to the hard, cruel facts of life. He said: "I am still painting by the yard. I dread to think how

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long this will last; and perhaps when the tide in my affairs comes I shall be mentally and physically enfeebled, and unable to do good work. My present occupation in art is not only offering insult to art, but destroying my own powers. But what am I to do? I must get food and raiment. I am sick unto death of the sordid misunderstanding men and women who surround me; but we must not be driven into hating human nature; we are sent to elevate it and refine it, and I hope one day I shall be able to do my share in this grand work of love." It is more than sad to think what competition is doing for many a bright soul. Competition in everything else, if we must have it; but, for God's sake, keep the hideous monster far away from art. The more subtile qualities which go to constitute excellence in art are blighted and killed, by the withering breath of competition. Competition can only bring success to those who are able to hit hard blows, and to trample upon their weaker fellows. Superior brute force and innate selfishness are excellent cards to hold if success in life is to be gauged by mere outward prosperity. No doubt it is necessary for the happiness of others that every man

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should look after his own interests, and strive for his own advance; but there are two ways of doing this.

Patronage in art when it takes the form of sympathetic belief in a deserving artist is helpful. Art could not have flourished without the great art patrons of past centuries. Men who had learnt, by long association with the beautiful in all parts of the world, to hallow the beautiful, men whose minds had become hereditarily disassociated from the killing blight of commerce—such men have at least given genius a chance of asserting itself; for, say what we may against a cultured aristocracy, heaven help art had it to depend upon the patronage of any section of the middle classes. The middle classes regard art simply as if it were a trade, and they envy the lucky artist who can produce "such pretty pictures" without having to work, whereas he probably works and suffers more in isolated hours of his existence, than falls to the lot of those who envy him, during their whole lifetime.

Patronage in art when it takes the form of wishing to direct and to pay for the production of so much work after its own heart, even when

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that direction be high and lofty, is essentially unhealthy. It tends to kill originality. When such patronage takes the form it unhappily takes too often, of paying heavily for the production of vulgarity, it is not only unhealthy, but perfectly poisonous.

The young artist of high aims and aspirations has much with which to contend. If he be not born in a sympathetic atmosphere, he probably finds himself surrounded by a race of shoddy-men and parvenus—soulless, mere animated clay, who cannot understand him or his mission, and whose only aim is to be considered in society, which is probably the society which worships the golden calf, and revels in Mrs. Grundy, and in scandal and innuendo. He strives to get into a higher, better atmosphere, where he can breathe, or, in other words, get sympathy—the food and drink which can alone stimulate a man to advance.

As Dr. Samuel Smiles says, we only hear of those who succeed. Many fall by the way-side, trampled upon and down-trodden. In the walks of literature, imagine a Samuel Smiles or Thomas Carlyle going all over London with "Self-Help" and "Sartor Resartus," the former

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never getting a publisher at all, and the latter only succeeding at the last moment, and not until he had become so disgusted, as to be on the point of leaving for America. In these early days the young author, if he is worth his salt, has a trying time of it, especially as regards his friends. They are willing enough to encourage him so long as he amuses them, but so soon as he aspires to be a teacher, they one and all resent what they consider to be an assumption. He is told not to *write so loftily*, to write *what will go down with the public.* It is agonizing indeed to be goaded on to perpetuate falsehood and weakness, or to dish up stale and profitless facts and fancies, when he is conscious that he holds a brief from the great Master of truth. He had better bury his wand and book like Prospero than follow such advice. Many a young writer is crushed by these baneful influences. He finds his best work misunderstood, while his feeble and debased work is applauded. The better his work, the greater his chances of failure, unless he have gold and influence to buy his way, or immense strength to hold on, and be true to himself until he triumphs at last. The artist who possesses real merit undergoes a

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precisely similar experience. His friends applaud his early efforts, but when it is discovered that he is anxious to raise his environment to his own level, and that he refuses to come down to the ideas of art by which he is surrounded, they shake their heads, and talk of the artist as "somewhat eccentric," or a "little mad." He is advised to paint that which will pay, to pander to popular taste. If he refuse, and find no sympathetic patron, he probably starves. He had better starve than debase his high calling.

But so soon as fame dawns for the artist or for the author, the world, the little, ignorant, selfish, narrow world in which he moved, proclaims trumpet-mouthed, that it always saw the germs of genius genius which, to do it justice, it was totally unable to see, and decidedly unwilling to take on faith. Then comes a rush to the studio of the artist, to be the first in the field to buy his early work, and then are many heard proclaiming aloud, far and wide, that a long friendship has subsisted between them and the artist, whom, they give the world to believe, they have been helping forward all along.

So it is with the true artist, unless a variety of favourable circumstances, or the fact of being

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born in an artistic atmosphere, conspire to make things easy for him.

To be just, a man born to raise thousands and tens of thousands, may be millions, and whose soul is divided from the aims and thoughts of those millions by a whole sphere, cannot reasonably look for recognition from his own immediate *entourage*—a small crowd, which symbolizes the larger crowd without, the unthinking masses, and which is probably no better and no worse than are they.

The poet, the artist, and the teacher, in all stages of their development, must discard the idea of rising by the assistance of those with whom chance has early associated them.[1] The world must be their friend. They must seek sympathy and recognition from a limited circle scattered over the whole world, not from the small circle chance may have thrown them amongst.

[1] I take this opportunity of saying that in anything I may have written, now write, or shall write, I intend my words to be taken generally, and not as applying to individuals. Personally I have no reason to complain of the conduct of *real* friends towards me, very much on the contrary; but if the cap fits, although it has been, is, and never will be intended for any person, it may be worn.

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How, then, is the artist to make known his mission? As I have before said, if his brush is to earn his early bread he never will and never can make known his mission. Never, perhaps, has there been a time when "artistic" *skill* could find so ready a market. Let me instance the vulgar passion for hand-painted screens and hand-painted Christmas cards, as if the mechanical reproduction of really good designs in either, were not preferable to the weak daubing by which one is offended now on all hands. For what can these cards be, when each card is but a repetition of its predecessor, the hasty work of some "poor-devil" painter who is compelled to do this to get bread? The same may be said of what are too often enormities in the shape of plaques and hand-painted fans, and a number of kindred offences against true art, which are every day obtruded upon us. Thus the unworthy in art finds encouragement where one might at least expect something better, from quarters, in fact, where it should meet with well-merited scorn or at least regretful pity. This leads to the enormous demand for pot-boilers devoid of soul and of thought—the passion for illus-

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tration in literature, for illuminated *menu* cards, and countless other symptoms of a depraved and diseased taste regarding art.

One and all, they may be taken as developments of the debasing influence of sensualism upon art progress. Mr. Ruskin has said, "My last and most deliberate writings have lost much of their influence with the public by disagreeably insisting that the duty of a great painter was rather to improve than to amuse." Mr. Ruskin's contention thus needs further elaboration, and it cannot too often be insisted upon. Art, in its purest sense, has nothing to do with administrating to mere enjoyment, except such enjoyment be taken to be of a highly metaphysical nature. Art is pain and anguish. The art critic, professional or amateur, is only an art critic worthy of the name when he devotes his best energies to the task of unravelling and understanding the meaning of a picture, just as he would in the effort to comprehend a scientific treatise, or to dive down to the last depths of meaning in studying the subtilties and abstrusities of the "Divina Commedia," or "Paradise Lost."

To succeed merely in making *pretty* pictures

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is a very lowly and ignoble office. And this is why I say, as I have said before, that the dining-room is no place for works of art of the very best description. A good digestion cannot accompany a pained and highly strung mind. The surroundings of a room in which one has to eat and to drink, should simply possess the beauty of neutrality, of restful grace, and not be given over to the perpetuation of sublime and mind-searching thoughts registered in oils. The study or the library is the proper place for such works, and indeed I question whether in all cases the fitting place for pictures demanding thought is not in a gallery of their own.

The struggle in art would lose half its bitterness if men were sufficiently advanced to demand nothing but the excellent of its respective kind. Thus the rich man might have his Turner and his Constable. The middle-class man who cannot afford such works of art should be content, instead of loading his walls with worse than rubbish, in the possession of etchings and engravings of the great masters. For copies, whether clever adaptations or servile representations of any picture, if

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executed in the same medium as the original, must necessarily be shoddy and base in the eyes of the really refined and cultured; whereas an engraving or an etching only lays claim to a reflection, or a hint of a suggestion: a suggestion of a suggestion, to put it more plainly. Should it be objected that the very poor man, however cultured, is thus shut off from the possession of pictures altogether, I have but to repeat that the poor man, if he be really cultured, will find more pleasure in contemplating the works of the great masters in the galleries which are accessible to the public than he can possibly extract from canvases miserably bedaubed, or the coloured prints and oleographs which can offer him nothing but insult.

It behoves every real lover of art to do his best to make genuine art alone possible, and all libels upon art impossible. Artists' struggles would then be much less severe than they are at present, for every artist would find his true level. At present social influence, and that living god gold, and the ignorance and bad taste of the public, divide between them the responsibility of so much base work being recognized as art. This state of things should

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scarcely inspire envy in the minds of the artist proper, when he remembers that frauds are always discovered sooner or later. True genius learns to be charitable. It argues thus with itself: The age of shams cannot last for aye; the time will come when the poor man will prefer his honest steel chain to his brazen, lying aluminium enormity, and the poor girl will esteem humble cotton goods rather than cotton made to proclaim the transparent lie, "I am silk," or "I am velvet." True genius has to work not so much for the elevation of its contemporaries as for posterity, and it learns to regard the claims of the quack with an inward smile, knowing his glory is but ephemeral. There is only one awkward rider to be added here. The genius may starve before his mission is begun, much less finished. If his mission be finished, what matter to him whether an unkind world let him starve or not? All men are mortal. The span of life in this world is so short at the longest, a few years more or less can be no great benefit, no great loss; while the genius, although he may be left to starve, if he has accomplished his work, will gain that highest blessing which comes to mortals—the blessing of a quickening immortality.

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CHAPTER XIII.

ART RECOGNITION AND ART CRITICISM.

ALTHOUGH I have much to say under the above heading, I shall in some measure allow more powerful men than I to be my mouthpiece. I am concerned with the triumph of principles and of truth, and care only for that end. The means by which it is accomplished are unimportant so long as they be fair means.

The difficulties with which true art has to contend in this country, before it can obtain recognition, are superlatively great. In the first place, let it be remarked, that to our national exhibition of art are sent yearly some ten thousand pictures or thereabouts. About two thousand of these are accepted; there is no space for more. Of the accepted pictures a very considerable percentage is reserved for academicians and associates, and etiquette demands the

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recognition of the work of a certain number of academy students. There are, moreover, many claimants to be hung whose claims cannot be disregarded, so that a matter of a few hundred spaces is alone reserved for the great outside. Shall I say half the total spaces? Whether it be less or more, no matter. A certain number of pictures are selected by the hanging committee as being in their eyes "fit and proper" pictures to be placed on the walls of the Academy. These are arranged in racks and stacks. The favoured pictures are then hung, and the carpenters proceed upon the chosen canvases. "Hand us up that picture, Bill." "All right, Bob." Up it goes. It is just too big or too small, its colour kills the colour in the picture of the happy academician next to it, or it is too similar in style; down it goes again and another picture takes its place. I mention this to show how large an element of chance enters into the selection. Unavoidable, it may be said, but so it is.

Then as to the large proportion of space allotted to academicians. The President of the Royal Academy defended this on the ground that the academicians represented the cream of

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the art of this country, and therefore their work should be largely exhibited as denoting the art of the British Isles. I entertain a very strong opinion about this, but I do not wish to discuss that contention in detail just now. I imagine that the foregoing chapters will leave those of my readers who have discovered me between the lines, little difficulty in determining my real belief upon this matter. But I will say that if English art is to be represented by this charmed "House of Peers" of forty men, surely those forty men should be able to make good a claim to be, each one, a head and shoulders above his fellows in art! Is he so, or is he not? I appeal to the public verdict, free from prejudice, to decide that point. How comes it, too, that the work of such undoubted leaders of art as David Cox and Cecil Lawson were for a very long time persistently refused admission even to the sacred precincts, while yet other leaders, to wit, Gabriel Dante Rossetti and John Linnell, were accorded exhibitions all to themselves, so soon as public opinion loudly demanded such exhibitions. These men had been hostile all their lives to the academic system. It is told of an intimate friend of Cecil Lawson that,

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chancing one day to meet Rossetti in Cheyne Walk, he thus addressed him: "The Academy persistently refuses Cecil's work; it is very disheartening." "More fool he to send it there," was Rossetti's answer.

The Academy is ready enough to join issue with strength which it liketh not, but is powerless to crush. How is it that such a man as Keeley Halswelle has not long ago been selected for the academic honours he so richly deserves? Perhaps now that he has in a measure laid aside his mantle of originality, and is doing what I suppose is the *sensible* thing to do—painting for the public — he will receive the recognition which, to guard my words, I will say "he deserved quite as much years since as he deserves it now." What reflections, too, are necessarily born of the late venomous onslaught upon an individual artist on the part of practically the whole academic body. It may be granted this individual was not the very strongest champion for freedom in art he might have been. As to the merits or demerits of his work, as to his total innocence or partial commitment of the faults attributed to him, these things are outside the point at issue. He was a man who had

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risen to eminence by varied qualities, not all in harmony with art, more than likely. The force of his character had carried him to the front, unaided by the academic body. This was a sin, at all events, for whatever else he may have had to answer. The lowering conditions under which art is practised in England, and especially the art of portraiture in all its forms, had compelled him to do that, which was scarcely worthy of true art, no doubt; but when he erred in this respect, he erred in company with a vast assemblage of artists, academic and otherwise, who have to consider and to pander to the whims, fancies, conceits, and vanities of fashionable patrons. The conditions of this man's life made such pandering far more excusable in him than in those who have all the *éclat* of being *Hall-marked*, recognized artists, and who ought to be above letting their genius out to hire, for they labour under no hard, cruel necessity to fetter and debase their natural powers. This man's sin was, that he had not taken the sacrament of the Academy, that he had dared to be a great power in its despite. Were he ever so feeble, and ever so guilty of lapses, as his enemies endeavour to maintain, he would have

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been forgiven all, had he not sinned the sin of independence. The debasing estimate put upon academic training and academic infallibility, and the strong animus against individuality, which the evidence given by so-called *experts* in that case laid bare to the world, has struck the first mortal wound at an institution which has become effete and cliquey, and is, in a very large measure, outside the sphere of the higher development and guidance of true art in this country.

About the influences which go to aid the acceptance of work on the part of the Royal Academy, I prefer to suppress myself. For obvious reasons I shall say very little about them. I have not the slightest hesitation in saying, however, that *influence* has more to do with the matter than is generally supposed, and, moreover, that strong originality must seek recognition from without the Academy, before it can find a place within its walls. Even the most simple, the most ardent partisans of Burlington House, can scarcely imagine that merit is the only passport to admission there, or that merit is always accepted. Human nature is weak, and it is too much to be ex-

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pected of men who have sunk into quiet contentment with the sempiternal repetition of their earlier work, that they will hail with acclamation the apparition of new thought and new methods. Were they all genuine lovers of art, for art alone, they would do so; but sometimes this love has never existed, and at others it has been killed by mammon.

I ask, Why should work not be sent in unnamed? and, moreover, as this alone could accomplish the end I have in view, why should it not be incumbent upon the judges to pledge themselves to inspect no work before the day it is sent in? A judge is not expected to examine evidence before a case comes into court, and no criminal is hanged without certain representatives of the people being present to see fair play. I contend that a certain section of the public ought to be admitted during the process of the selection of works, sent in for the approval of the hanging committee; in fact, the selection should be so arranged that it might be open to all on the payment of a sufficient fee—if, indeed, it should not be free, as I believe all exhibitions of the Royal Academy should be free. The institution is quite rich enough, and

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ample money for all purposes might be gleaned from the sale of catalogues. This admission of the public on judging days, under certain necessary restraints to avoid an undue congestion, would at least palliate existing mischiefs and retard their growth, if it could not be counted upon to cure the evils altogether.

There is yet another aspect of the case, as affecting art recognition, which I cannot do better than give in the words of Mr. Wyke Bayliss, which I quote from an article by that gentleman appearing in the "Art Magazine," entitled, "Before the Council." He says:

"Suppose that every member is himself striving—striving nobly—for fame. Absorbed in the pursuit of his own visions of what is beautiful in nature and in art, he also has his life to live and his race to run; if he is ahead of others in the race, that meant only that the running is more swift. . . . I perhaps have been spending a year of my life in working out what seems to me a noble thought. He who will have to judge my work has been spending his life—a better life than mine[1]—in working

[1] Why this false modesty, Mr. Bayliss? Why a better life than yours? I should say the balance of probability lies

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just the other way. Is it wrong in him that he does not, the moment my picture comes before him, possess himself of my spirit, and see with my eyes? The error he makes, if it be an error, is an error inherent in the finite. . . . Until the selection is made, the hanging cannot so much as begin. Suppose the committee sat for a whole week, eight hours each day; the result would have been that each work must have been placed before them, examined, voted upon, and its fate sealed, in the average time of twenty seconds. The tendency of this high pressure is not only to produce individual cases of injustice, but also distinctly to lower the standard of English art.

"It is a well-known fact that the very greatest works of art do not, as a rule, make their full impression upon the mind at a first glance. A picture of the highest order therefore—one, that is, in which the gradations of tone are almost infinitely subtile—is robbed of

the other side. Is there not a slight *soupçon* of flunkeyism here? and if not, don't depreciate yourself—you who have done so much for art. False modesty is hateful; it is only another form of insincerity. But there, one must make bread and cheese!

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its best qualities, by being rapidly passed before the eyes in an oblique position, scarcely held stationary for a moment by the carpenters who carry it, and pitched forward or backward, perhaps, in a false or harsh light. If a thousand hobgoblins danced before the eyes of the council, they could scarcely make the task of judgment more difficult. . . .

"Originality of style or independence of thought is scarcely possible to those whose success depends upon the suffrages of an average committee. To be in advance of the age, as was David Cox, or to dare to think for one's self, as does Rossetti, is of necessity to be driven out, or to be classed eccentric."

I have quoted at great length from this writer, because, with the exception of the lapse to which I have objected in a foot-note, I agree with every word he has written, and I am conscious that his words will carry greater weight than mine.

Mr. Seymour Haden has elaborated other parts of this subject. He argues to prove, and to my mind he succeeds in proving completely, that any Academy is apt to drift into hard and fast and unfair lines in drawing its conclusions.

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The insane hatred of our English Academy to the French *school* of painting, goes to prove this. The French school, whatever its faults, has much to teach us. It is certainly marked by a freedom of thought and method which we may well envy. Nobody can visit the great French galleries without feeling sad about the art of his own country. I do not say that France possesses the great pillars of strength in art, which England may justly claim; and, moreover, Turner and Constable may fairly be considered to have sowed the seeds of French landscape painting of these later days. Yet although our climate, with its majestic and sublime cloud and mist effects, gives us far greater opportunities for poetic treatment in landscape; still, to our shame be it said, the French have managed to shoot ahead of us. I attribute this solely to one cause: the much greater freedom allowed in their schools. The same remark applies to the art schools of Munich.

Let me pause for a moment to remark how far nobler is the German system of teaching drawing than is ours. Instead of the grandmotherly stippling and stripping, hatching and cross-hatching, in vogue with us, the young

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German draughtsman is taught rapidity of execution, and to draw and paint from memory, one of the most important accomplishments in all art—especially in landscape painting, where those effects which are the most worthy of the painter's skill are the sudden transitions on the face of nature. No wonder, then, that if one sees an especially telling woodcut in any of our illustrated papers, it is nearly certain to turn out to be the work of a continentalist—probably of a German.

For whether the effect to be analyzed be one's impression concerning a beautiful natural tableau, or merely the flash of a humorous conceit across the brain, how is it possible, to give expression in an epitomized form to the one or to the other—to conceptions so fleeting, so subtile, except one can retain a clear sharp vision of the original conception upon the retina of one's memory.

Thus comes it that all art which is simply the result of the servile copying of natural objects is practically ludicrous. Imagine the confusion of ideas and impressions, or rather the almost total lack of any definite ideas and impressions, which must result from the laboured

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transcription of natural objects under the varied aspect of light and shade to which every such object must be exposed; to say nothing of the diverse impressions such, under different aspects, must convey to the really poetic mind. For the natural object itself is the least essential part of a grand artistic production, the particular aspect of that object at a certain time is an important part thereof; but the delineation of original impressions, which the poet, not being an automaton, can only live out once—for such impressions go as they came, and others take their place—is the most important element of all in any work of art whatsoever.

Thus it seems to me that the whole system of academic tradition is hurtful to the progress of true art, and opposed to the proper recognition thereof. It demands careful "studies," laboured imitations. It essayed to manufacture artists, and to cut all art to one pattern. What does Mr. Seymour Haden say in this connection? "It seems to me," he says, "that the best art is *conventional*—that is to say, suggestive rather than imitative. In nature, for instance, there is no such thing as a line; and it has been often said, in depreciation of etching,

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that it is merely suggestive, because it is an art which expresses itself with lines. But is it not the same in every branch of art? The painter, with the relatively coarse materials at his disposal—his canvases, his hog-tools, and his battery of *opaque* pigments—does not seek to reproduce the morning mist or noonday haze, he only seeks to suggest it; the sculptor does not make his statue of marble because it is like flesh, but because marble, while it admits of perfection of form, suggests for human flesh the purity which it is the province of art to claim for it." These are grand words, and they mean simply that art in its best form can only appeal to the inner circle, to those who have eyes to see, and who have brains to imagine beauty and to appreciate suggestiveness; and it is by familiarizing the public with faithful art of this kind that noble truths may be taught them, truths which will permeate society in ever widening cycles. It is nonsense to say that it is no good giving the public food they cannot eat, drink they cannot drink; they will ultimately come to discriminate between the sublime and the base; and if you let them see enough of the former quality, they will gradually learn its beauty.

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The mischief underlying the academic system is the striving after a distinct school of painting. This is an abominable error. What is school? what *is* the British school? It certainly cannot be a school which has its fountain-head at Burlington House, or why do we see Cecil Lawson under the blazonry of "British school" at the National Gallery? Who knows from whence he got his impressions, from whence he got his early training in art? From his mother in the flesh, I believe; but certainly not from what should have been his mother in the spirit—the Royal Academy. In short, art in its highest form is cosmopolitan; it is just that in which all nations ought to meet, if they cannot in their languages. Individuality I revel in, as confined to a man; individuality as confined to a set is absolutely death to anything real, anything noble. Community of interest, community of thought, as much as you like; but let us have no *schools*, no tyranny. Art has nothing to do with schools or with nationalities. A man's birthplace must tincture his thought, but the really great rise above all feeble resemblance to an all-feeble environment. Heaven keep us from *schools* in art as in everything else. Art is designed to

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make the great pulse of the leaders of humanity beat in unison; and I know of no agency so likely to blend men into universal brotherhood as that which springs from the meeting on common grounds of beauty, charity, and love, which are the essence of any art worthy the name.

I had intended to conclude this chapter by alluding to the utterly unmeaning "word-spinning," which is the best that can be said of so much current art criticism. What I would have said in this connection has been ably and fully put forth in an article on English Art in the September number of "The National Review." I shall not trouble to re-write what all the world has read, or should have read. In conclusion, let me say, whether recognition come to the painter or not, his ambition must be noble and pure, and it must sustain him throughout. As Mr. Bayliss has said, "What more shall the painter ask than to spend his life in mastering his art, except only that he may have time to master it before he dies? This is the painter's true reward."

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CHAPTER XIV.

GENIUS AND ITS PREROGATIVES.

SOMEBODY has said genius is the power of hard work — that and that alone. Mr. Matthew Arnold's definition of genius is somewhat similar to the foregoing, for he makes genius to be merely an excess of energy. This is true, and yet it is false. The genius must necessarily be a hard worker; he can't help it. He must also be a great producer, a great originator; he can't help that. The genius is the great sufferer for humanity, the great slave to humanity. The measure of his success depends upon the age in which he is born, his physical strength, the circumstances of his life, and upon a variety of considerations which I cannot attempt to sum up. On the other hand, I may say that I have little faith in the reality of unrecognized genius. Recognition may be, it generally is, long in coming; it may be a posthumous recognition.

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Unrecognized genius exists, and has existed, as I have already shown; but, on the other hand, how many claimants to the distinction of genius are mere empirics! How often one hears the expression bandied about, "Oh, he was a great genius, but he could never stick to one thing; he was always trying his hand at this, that, and the other, but he never finished anything." Such a man, however able, however talented, however clever, could be no genius. The distinctive badge of genius is to be possessed of one central idea, one grand central prism, from which light in all its gradations radiates. No man has a claim to the title of Genius who is not so possessed; no man has a claim to genius who does not possess the will to make that force dominant and dominating. Genius cannot exist without force, it is one of its elementary properties; it is its emphatic prerogative—force and hard work. The mind of the genius can only slumber from excess of thought. It has its seasons of torpidity, but never of mediocrity. Genius is omnipotent with its possessor, and thus by the sheer force of its workings within him, he must, *nolens volens*, be a great worker.

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I hope I shall not be misunderstood in what I am about to say, for I do not say it in any cant or orthodox spirit. I say, however, very emphatically and very distinctly, that the genius would appear to be led up by a higher hand to accomplish his predestined mission. All kinds of barriers and disabilities at first thwart him. It may be that he has to fight against a poor constitution; it may be that he is handicapped by the want of money; or he may be cribbed, cabined, and confined by uncongenial surroundings in his early life, or by being unhappily mated in his later life, as was poor Albert Dürer, and as many another genius has been. In striking a profit and loss account, however, let me say that the stronger the originative power within, the greater may be the obstacles to be overcome. They compel the teacher to fall back within himself, and to develope his inner nature. What, then, is this higher hand but his own nature — the nature implanted within him? For, to express my meaning in conventional phrase, he possesses a larger share of the Godhead than do ordinary men.

On the other hand, no amount of mere hard work, if the vital spark be wanting, will pro-

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duce a genius. The work of the able and talented—highly creditable, highly useful—can never be anything more than filling-in work—work subservient to the higher mind of the originator and discoverer. The line between genius and talent may sometimes be difficult to draw, but it is pretty clearly defined nevertheless. Who can deny that Dr. Johnson was a man of gigantic intellectual power, as hard a worker as ever lived? But I scarcely think his most ardent admirers would claim for him the distinction of genius. So far as actual work goes, in the narrow sense of the term, Shelley might have been considered almost an idle man; but who can doubt that the amount of inner secret mental suffering and *labour* which was compressed into his short life exceeded tenfold the suffering and work of Johnson, throwing all his morbid fear of death, his superstitions and hypochondria, into the scale? Shelley suffered for humanity as the great Nazarene suffered. The great poet and painter may appear to be idle; he may stand beside the river current, *lazily* gazing into the flowing tide; he may sit for hours under the trees watching the clouds. It is in such

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moments as these that his hardest work is done, when the crowd around him think him idle and listless. For let me say, before I dismiss this analysis of the distinguishing characteristics of genius as apart from talent, and of the difference between the methods of work of the one and of the other, that when the originator comes to perform that which has been born from the very travail of his brain, he does this unimportant portion of his work with lightning rapidity. The mere clever worker builds up his structure—a very fair structure too—with laborious and prolonged efforts. There is a wide distinction between the two.

Genius is never satisfied. It never secures results, but such as whet its appetite for further achievement. Talent sets itself a certain task to accomplish, and rests content with the result once achieved. Genius, being a craving for the infinite, finds its highest achievements serve no other purpose than to land it into further realms of unfathomable space.

It may be objected—and doubtless such an objection will be urged—"How about these geniuses of yours? how much of the Godlike do you find in their own lives? how often is

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the example they set to weaker mortals in their daily life pure and holy? how many are Atheists or Deists? how many worshippers at the shrine of Venus or of Bacchus?" And the genius-hater rubs his hands and thinks he has annihilated claims to pre-eminence which his puny, self-conceited, self-sufficient soul cannot tolerate.

The vulgar jug-jug of the soulless makes itself heard in a never-ceasing outcry against the shortcomings in matters of daily life and of morality, on the part of genius. How often do the vulgar mistake the very highest attributes of the Genius, his very purity of soul, for moral or religious obliquity? The masses will ever confuse gold with tinsel. I am here, however, in no spirit of the apologist. I aspire simply to the position of interpreter, and in that capacity I desire to examine into the nature of these charges against genius in the aggregate, and to see how far these real or imaginary blemishes are capable of being explained when dissected.

Suffering is the only road to refinement, to force, to any real or enduring work. What great thing has ever been accomplished but at an immense sacrifice of nerve and tissue, brain,

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muscle, and human sweat? Every really great man must of necessity be a great sufferer: whether he be a moralist, pure and simple, imbued with the yearning desire—as was Jesus of Nazareth, or St. Bernard—to lift men out of the rut of grossness and sensuality; whether he be an ardent votary of some political creed, which he conceives has but to be brought into practice, to prove fruitful in happy results for the good of a nation, or of a world; whether he be a poet, casting his vision within and without, and striving to rub the blotches and smears off the darkened glass, through which the vulgar view, and distort in their vision, sublime and elevating truths; or whether he be a painter, endeavouring to put on canvas the grand insights into the godlike in nature—to which he has the key—that other men may see, and learn wisdom and hope therefrom. All enthusiasts suffer very hell-pangs in the labour to bring forth the truth which is in them. It is inevitable; it is inherent in the nature of things. All birth means pain; and the birth-pangs of genius is the curse of God upon those pigmies whom He makes His instruments to lift the earth nearer unto Him.

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It is so in very truth. They must pay the penalty of being different from other men ; they must share with the Godhead the pain and the misery which the vision of a world all too imperfectly realizing his far-seeing schemes of ultimate millennium must ever present. The sufferings of seers and of prophets are in excess, in countless ways, of the sufferings of ordinary mortals. Knowledge of their weakness—their limited power to achieve the purposes, the schemes, the aspirations, with which their souls are consumed—with which their very being is saturated to its very quick, and with which their very existence is instinct, compels them to writhe under tortures unnameable, unfathomable. They perceive how little impression their most successful efforts can make upon the mass of humanity, and their realization of this, causes them to wallow in the slough of despond. They for ever catch at the skirts of an Utopia which evades their grasp.

Let us take the most pre-eminent among great workers, and ask ourselves what measure of happiness, or rather of rest, can fall to their lot. Even those who have effected grand and beneficent changes, those who have lifted men

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on to a higher platform of thought and of deed, and have seen this end accomplished during their sojourn in this mundane sphere, how miserably far away from their grand ideals, the most brilliant victories which may fall to their lot must appear. It does not matter that such victories may exceed immeasurably all hopes of success, which in the earlier days of their life work they permitted themselves to entertain. Man expands as he advances. Every higher elevation shows him yet wider expanses beyond, until he reaches those shadowy altitudes where his vision fails him, and his senses are bewildered and befogged by the infinity of the fields of labour which open up to him. There comes a time to such a man when he says to himself, "I have done that which it lay in me to do; others must take up the mantle which I have to let fall; others must carry on my work." He then allows himself to indulge dreams of ultimate perfection—of a realm of peace, joy, and happiness, in store for future ages. His faith must be strong and sturdy to permit him to sustain such hopes. But anyhow his heart is still unsatisfied; his heirloom of suffering still accompanies him; he cannot

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shake it off. There it is omnipresent; or, if it leave him for a moment, it returns with renewed pains and tortures. "Of what avail would perfect temporal happiness be," he cries, "in a world where the hand of death must for ever assert its supremacy? Were all men happy, free from sorrow, strife, and misery, they would still have that spectre of death to haunt them. The wear and tear of our wretchedness and warring woe alone make the idea of death tolerable; but in such a world men would want to live for ever." This thought dissipates at once the dream of the possibility of a world free from sorrow, for with the black gaunt spectre for ever behind the chair, the most happy conditions of life would but represent greater bitterness. "Away," he says, "with the dream of ultimate happiness! It is unreal, impossible;" and he thanks God that it is so, when he pictures to himself the miserably colourless world a so-called world of perfect bliss would be, minus sin and death. The *chiaro-oscuro* of life would be utterly destroyed, and existence would be reduced to vapid insipidity. There would be no incentive to heroic efforts, no lofty purpose remaining. The pain

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attending progress is in itself a joy, wearing, agonizing as it is. Progress is pain. The men in the van of the world's advance must bear the heat and the burden of the day; must wipe the blood-beads from their brows. But this is their joy, contradiction in terms as it may seem, but true nevertheless. It is from this that their belief in a grand immortality springs, for such belief has been given to the world by its highest and noblest thinkers and sufferers. True it is, as the grand Tennyson has said, "more life and fuller that I want." Man wants to be living, advancing, moving upward and onward.

The great teachers and thinkers of this and every age sustain a strain almost to tension point. Can we wonder, that as they are not as other men in their virtues, they are unlike them in their vices? The miserable worms, the grovelling routinists who but supply a tiny crank or lever in the machinery of life, or who are the very dust on such levers and cranks impeding their progress, point in scorn to these intellectual giants, with the old trite asses' bray, "He saved others, himself he cannot save." They hate him. They do not want the world

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to be upraised and revolutionized—it is all very good to them. "Let us alone," they cry, and they look around for something to discredit his mission, something they may fasten upon to bring his name and his teaching into disrepute. "He preaches that which he fails to carry out in his own life," they say; and they forthwith proceed to cast about to pick some hole in the strait-jacket of narrow orthodoxy in which they would fetter and strangle him, or in that mantle of

> "dull and selfish chastity,
> That virtue of the cheaply virtuous
> Who pride themselves in senselessness and frost,"

which they have taken from their own shoulders to clothe his limbs withal. Ye gods! and very gods! Know, ye miserable groundlings, that the divine-born poet, painter, or preacher, lives not for himself but for humanity; his pains and his sorrows are like the barbs of hell fiends to your little vexations, your little crosses. Know, too, that all nature is compensatory. That the mind may not crumble and totter from its base, that the physical frame may not decrepitate, reaction must come sooner or later, and come it does. The greatest of mortals

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must be more keenly mortal in all points than ordinary clay, or his power to be great would be non-existent. In his excess of humanity, his genius has its birth. What marvel, then, that it is possible to point to Turner and to Brougham, to Shakespeare and to Shelley, to Byron and to Cockburn, to Beaconsfield or to Rienzi, and to accuse each one of some form or the other of fleshly indulgence or human vanity. Such lapses are unhappily too often the only brain-medicine possible to the man of genius. All his advance, all his life work, has been his hell; and that he should not become as a god upon earth, from his extreme isolation from other men in thought and in act, he reverts—all history proves it—into the weaknesses to which flesh is heir. This is his only relief. Pleasure is a dull and stupid word, and has no meaning except as applied to animal enjoyments. Those most appreciative of nature's beauties, of moral sublimities, of theoretical perfections, do not feel *pleasure* in their contemplation. Were they to do so, it would denote that their day was over, that decline had set in; there would be no more progress for them. Again I say

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progress is pain—pure, simple, and unalloyed. Some form of vanity, or some natural animal propensity common to man, is the only re-creation possible for a man who is working out his own and the world's re-creation. The greater the genius, the greater the progress, and the greater the need for rest, for resuscitation, for recreation; else the brain must give way, and insanity or death must be that man's portion. Marvel not, then, that your great men are your great libertines or your great fops. They will ever be so; it is inherent in the very nature of things.

What is it to say of the genius that he is vain. Granting that it be true, let us examine the nature of his vanity. True worth is always modest—so say the wiseacres. But surely a man whose head and shoulders tower above his fellows, cannot always be bending his knees and curving his back to bring himself down to the level of his fellow mortals. If a genius be guileless, if he be not eaten up with disingenuousness, a certain vanity must unquestionably distinguish him. Again, certain affectations are laid to his charge. In the first place it is necessary to satisfy one's self that such

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affectations are not in reality natural eccentricities, and are actually badges of genius. Or they may be assumed—not worthily, though of necessity—to catch the vulgar fancy, so as to obtain a hold upon the masses, a hold which once gained may be used to lift the public upwards. Granting, however, that this affectation be pure self-love, and be the more thankful still, then you may know that your genius is making this one form of animalism serve as his recreation, and that by this comparatively venial fault he is gaining that rest in which the well-springs of his inspiration are being renewed. Perhaps the genius flies for refuge to the goblet. How much the world may owe to that fact, who can estimate? Again, the world pries into the inner life of the oracle, and finds that he lives apart from his wife, or that his "lesser man" is not tied to him by the priest and the ring—ordinances of man, ordinances, moreover, which, as in the case of Shelley, he may consider frivolous and unbecoming, or positively unhallowed and pernicious. For "*sins*" of this description, the world is most harsh upon the leaders of thought whom they may find *wanting*. Fools that men are! Surely the idealist,

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and the dreamer, the dweller in the tents of lofty thought and fancy, must often find mere canvas an all too-insufficient covering; the rains and the winds of reality cast down their houses, and they may discover in the women they had hoped to bring within their charmed circle of thought, or from whom, being more sensible, they had expected at least unquestioning faith and devotion, nothing but unsympathetic clods upon their further development. What wonder then that many a genius may live apart from his wife, or may refuse to run the risk of being bound to a wife at all. It is a case of throwing off trammels, or refusing to be trammelled. To such natures, highly nervous and sentient, the stupid chains which bind other men must often seem intolerable, and prove in practice too unbearable to endure. They must perforce break them. A lofty ideal—and the inevitable bitterness of utter disappointment. They learn to seek for sympathy and for pure love no more. Their natures demand recreation, for "the passions, cramped no longer," *must* "have scope and breathing space;" and they are not immaculate.

Let it not be supposed that I am defending

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immorality. I am contending for two things. Firstly, that so much so-called immorality is no immorality at all; and secondly, that while the genius is superhuman he is essentially extra-human, and that while his temptations to deviate from the codes of morality man has invented are in every way tenfold those of the masses, his very nature makes an excessive assertion of the man within him absolutely necessary.

But let no vain fools, no blind babblers of crystallized truths and fossilized falsehoods, no rattlers of dry bones in Church or in State, no poor pigmy I nor pigmy thou, take to himself the prerogative of this license, which is the proper compensation allowable to suffering genius, to the great original thinkers who render alive and productive those truths which the dull masses perceive but fitfully, and without their aid would never comprehend at all.

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CHAPTER XV.

AN APPEAL FOR FREEDOM OF THOUGHT IN ART.

THE whole tenour of this book has been in sympathy with the heading to this chapter. I wish to conclude by making a more direct appeal to the British nation, a nation supposed to nurture an honest love for freedom in all its shapes and forms—although it is sometimes difficult to maintain in these later days that England has any real claim to that distinction. We are in danger of losing the reality in our constant worship of its name alone.

I have endeavoured to demonstrate that crushing conventionalities, ordinances, rules, systems, schools, and the like, kill art, and sap its sources of vitality and fruitfulness. True art must be independent, must stand alone. Dependence means the death of originality.

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I have laboured to show that the only leader the artist-poet should permit himself to follow, is the leader he himself chooses, not some leader chosen for him. There are not wanting thinkers who maintain that an intense admiration for a certain leader—that all the developments of hero-worship, in fact—go to prove that the soul of the admirer and that of the admired were either identical or commutual in spirit-land. This is, of course, mere speculation; but however much a genius may set up his heroes, he can follow no hero solely—or, in fact, in the true sense of the word, follow he cannot at all. He is to be followed, not to follow. Thus comes it that, in order that no set ideas should become so powerful as to impress themselves on all humanity, and reduce humanity to a dull stereotyped level, every great man requires his complement or his antidote. Turner had his in Constable. Turner was creative, idealistic, imaginary, poetic; Constable was realistic and poetically imitative. The influence of the one balanced that of the other; and from these antitheses—who were always mutually imagining, the one against the other, that he was degrading art—may be traced the basis

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of all advanced thought in relation to landscape painting. And what richer outgrowth could spring from these counter influences than the much to be regretted Cecil Lawson, who was at once grandly realistic, marvellously idealistic!

Thus I hope it will be understood that although I place poetic art, which can alone find its highest expression in landscape painting, in the front of all art, yet I do not champion any particular art to the extent, or in the sense which would exclude any other genuine art whatsoever. I am in favour of honest art in all its multiform shapes. I only attack the base and unworthy. Every genuine art faculty or art development has its proper place. I have no doubt at all which is the highest attribute of art; but none the less am I strongly opposed to the highest demanding a monopoly, as I am strongly opposed to monopolies of all kinds, in art as in everything else.

I simply demand for art what Mr. Herbert Spencer demands for religion—free expression, unfettered, untrammelled by crushing conventionalities. This is what Liszt and Wagner most nobly demand for music, what Professor

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Tyndall demands for politics, what Henry Irving demands for the drama; and John Ruskin and others demand this same freedom for art.

I ask, too, of the public never to judge of men's work when they do not understand it. Be sure you are capable of understanding it before you attempt to pass judgment. This is, unfortunately, what very few do. If they know nothing themselves they talk somebody else's opinion—some art critic's, who probably knows even less than they, because he fancies that he knows. Remember, too, that because you do not understand a work now, you may understand it hereafter. For, in the case of our fellow-creatures, we may live in the society of a man or woman for years, failing to see the meaning of their lives, until some chance occurrence reveals it to us; and so in regard to scenes familiar, which strike us as commonplace until we are suddenly aroused to the full force of their beauty by some new light thrown upon them by sun, rain, or mist, and ever after they are sorrowfully endeared to us by the reflected light of what has been. These analogies apply to pictures. It behoves one,

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then, to be very careful how one judges, even if one has honestly any judgment at all in the matter. For how grossly are men's lives misjudged. Take the case of the great poet Shelley, one of England's best, purest, and most loveable men — poor fragile Shelley, almost too beautiful for the world into which he was born, where cant and hypocrisy are called religion. Shelley, who, like a captive bird in a close atmosphere, poured forth his song to the unlistening crowd beneath, in praise of virtue, truth, and love; then, with a bursting heart, beat his breast against the bars of systems and of creeds, and died. And this great man is but the symbol of many another in song and in art who dies all unseen, all unheard.

It is not a moment too soon to make this appeal; for the English race prides itself in its love of liberty, and yet it tolerates the existence of institutions in art which we can only describe as tyrannical. Just now I hear of a young artist, who has striven for years to gain admission to the Academy Schools, being turned back because the cast from which he copied, not having been dusted, and he naturally thinking

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it the safest plan to copy it, dust and all, found his prudence only made an excuse to reject him.

A visit to any exhibition of the Academy, however, is sufficient to prove to those who care to listen to the conversation of the assembled visitors, that even among our leaders of society very little real knowledge of the beautiful regarding art is to be found. The highest praise one ever hears bestowed on a landscape is that it is "very pretty," and the gazer hurries on to go into ecstasies over a field bristling with turnip-tops, or a child fondling a kitten, or some other commonplace. Then, again, before the mass of the visitors venture to admire a picture they first consult their catalogue. It is very disheartening to hear the various remarks passed upon pictures; sometimes one hears a good, sound, technical opinion, but, as a rule, the opinions expressed show an utter absence of all knowledge of art. It is the same at the exhibition of old masters. What is it that the majority of visitors admire? Is it not the dirt and the varnish? In good truth, among those who can penetrate the dirt and varnish—which wants a depth of culture and an appreciative knowledge of modern work

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—the result is too often disappointing to a degree.

However, I might prolong this portion of my work indefinitely, and I do not think self-evident facts need elaboration.

I shall rest content if my little work opens the eyes of those who have the power to bring a healthy tone into the whole realm and practice of art. Their eyes once open, the rest must follow.

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